HIKIKOMORI:

THE JAPANESE PHENOMENON OF SOCIAL WITHDRAWAL THROUGH THE EXAMINATION OF CULTURAL INFLUENCE, SOCIETAL EXPECTATION, AND ATTACHMENT THEORY

Rosa K. Kim

TC 660H
Plan II Honors Program
The University of Texas at Austin

May 15, 2019

Ann M. Repp, Ph.D.
Department of Psychology
Supervising Professor

Wendy I. Domjan, Ph.D.
Department of Psychology
Second Reader

ABSTRACT

Author: Rosa K. Kim

Title: Hikikomori: The Japanese Phenomenon of Social Withdrawal Through the Examination of Cultural Influence, Societal Expectation, and Attachment Theory

Supervising Professors: Ann M. Repp, Ph.D. and Wendy I. Domjan, Ph.D.

Meaning "to pull away," hikikomori has been an increasing phenomenon in Japanese adolescents and young adults in recent decades. This paper will explore the factors that contribute to this condition in which individuals exemplify an acute social withdrawal for long periods of time. This thesis aims to examine how Japanese culture, societal aspects, and patterns of attachment all work together to bring about the phenomenon of hikikomori. I will discuss the relationship between these factors—Japanese culture, societal expectations, and attachment—and how each factor plays an integral part in creating the phenomenon: hikikomori cannot exist without the presence of all three factors, and thus is a unique condition specific to Japan.

The first task is to analyze the role that culture plays in Japanese society. Next, the ways in which this cultural aspect pervades into social norms, expectations, and social relationships will be established. Then, I will examine attachment theory and how Japanese culture affects attachment security, as well as the effect of childrearing methods in Japan in relation to parent-child and peer relations.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To my Second Reader, Dr. Domjan, who first instilled my passion for psychology the first semester of my freshman year all those years ago.

To my Supervising Professor, Dr. Repp, who guided and grounded me throughout this year-long process, and whose Development of Attachment Relationship course led me to evaluate attachment from a developmental perspective and allowed me to finally understand my own childhood experiences.

To my parents, who dedicated their lives to securing the betterment of mine, and raised me how they thought was best because they wanted the best for me.

To my friends and peers, who constantly supported me, encouraged me, and believed in me. Thank you for being patient with me even when I was not patient with myself, and for being kind during the times I was not kind to myself.

I am endlessly grateful.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1: Introduction

In modern Japan, a strange epidemic has been on the rise for the last several decades. An increasing number of youth are dropping out of society and isolating themselves in their bedrooms. This phenomenon is referred to as *hikikomori*—the acute social withdrawal of Japanese individuals for years or even decades at a time. These individuals withdraw contact from family, rarely have friends, and do not attend school or have a job. They live in their bedrooms and never coming out, taking meals left at the door by the parents, surfing the web, video-gaming, reading, or idling (Teo, 2009). Hikikomori has become a silent epidemic that has had adverse effects on those who are diagnosed and their family members. Because it is a relatively new predicament that has been recently introduced in the field of psychology, the condition has not yet been widely studied and there is still much mystery and many unknowns about hikikomori. Is it appropriate to classify hikikomori as a mental illness or psychiatric condition, or is the phenomenon a result of social conditioning due to external stresses placed upon otherwise normal Japanese citizens by societal expectations? What are the causes, and is there a cure? Although social withdrawal is a behavior that has been observed in a variety of psychological disturbances, the aim of this paper is to explain hikikomori as a uniquely Japanese phenomenon through a closer examination of the necessary factors that make up the epidemic.

Definition

Impeding the search for the prevention and treatment of hikikomori is the difficulty in defining it. The term *hikikomori* comes from the Japanese word *hiki,* meaning "to pull," and *komoru,* meaning "withdrawing," thus the implication of pulling out or withdrawing from

society (Hikikomori, Solitary Youth of Japan). Tamaki Saito, a psychiatrist who was among the first clinicians to write extensively about the pathology of *hikikomori* and popularized the term, defines the phenomenon as occurring when recluses are withdrawn for at least six months and other psychiatric disorders do not better explain the primary symptom of withdrawal (Saito, 1998). According to Saito, the state of avoiding social engagement—including education, employment, and friendships—lasts for at least six months as a result of various factors (Teo and Gaw, 2010). The sufferers are paralyzed by profound social fears. Saito believes that these sufferers are tormented beings who want to go out in the world and make friends, but are not able to (Saito, 1998). Symptoms are varied across patients—some have violent outbursts alternating with infantile behavior such as pawing at the mother's body, and others might be obsessive, paranoid, and depressed (Hammond & Kremer, 2013). Some are likely to suffer depression or obsessive-compulsive behaviors. Maggie Jones of *New York Times* writes that these psychological problems are more often symptoms of hikikomori rather than its cause, and a consequence of spending months in isolation caged up inside their rooms and inside their heads. Jones recalls that one hikikomori took showers several hours a day and wore gloves as thick as an astronaut's to ward off germs, while another scrubbed the tiles of his family's shower for hours at a time. "Our water bills were ten times what they'd normally be," the hikikomori's brother told Jones during an interview. "It was as if he was trying to clean the dirt in his mind and his heart" (Jones, 2006).

There is still some uncertainty as to whether hikikomori is a separate disorder culturally specific to Japan as Saito says, or if it is a result of various psychological disorders such as major depressive disorder, social phobia, agoraphobia, or some personality disorders. For example, some psychologists are not completely sure of the extent to which Hikikomori differs from

NEET, which stands for Not in Employment Education or Training (Genda, 2005). According to the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, NEET is defined as "people who are not employed, not in school, not a homemaker, and not seeking a job." Though there are distinct differences in the behavioral symptoms of NEET and hikikomori (which will be further examined in Chapter 3), some commonalities in psychological tendencies can also be found, such as a display of some autistic tendencies or traits among both hikikomori and NEET. Both NEET and hikikomori show a tendency to deviate from mainstream cultural attitudes and values, though NEET are not characterized by the total reclusiveness and withdrawal that characterize hikikomori (Genda, 2005).

Hikikomori, unlike NEET, has established criteria. In 2003, the Japanese government released 141 pages of detailed guidelines on how to respond to hikikomori, in which experts from the Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare established the criteria (Teo, 2009):

1. A lifestyle centered at home
2. No interest or willingness to attend school or work
3. Persistence of symptoms beyond six months
4. Schizophrenia, mental retardation or other mental disorders have been excluded
5. Among those with no interest or willingness to attend school or work, those who maintain personal relationships (e.g., friendships) have been excluded

Despite some uncertainty on the exact causes of hikikomori, it is evident that hikikomori represents a terrible loss on both a personal and societal level, and compels further research to specify etiology and factors that contribute towards mitigating this problem. Although there are

speculations suggesting that mental illness plays a causal role in the onset of hikikomori, hikikomori seems to be a condition born out of several external factors rather than the stigmatized image of hikikomori who are merely "mentally ill," which paints the hikikomori themselves as the primary transgressors who are responsible for their problem rather than the issues stemming from Japan's socio-cultural tendencies.

Hikikomori's History

The first known study of a condition characterized by social withdrawal in Japan dates back to 1978 when Yoshimi Kasahara described cases of *taikyaku shinkeishou*, or "withdrawal neurosis" (Kasahara, 1978). By the late 1980s and early 1990s, many reports in the psychiatric literature began to use the term *hikikomori* to describe the condition. Since then, it has been consistently translated as a social withdrawal syndrome (Takahata, 2003). Hikikomori was first brought to mainstream attention via mass media in 1998, when a prominent Japanese psychiatrist Saito wrote a best-selling book with the word in its title, ensuring its place in the lexicon (Saito, 1998). NHK, the Japanese national broadcasting network, ran a campaign from 2002 to 2005 to draw attention to the struggles of hikikomori (Kaneko, 2006), and even the *New York Times Magazine* ran a feature article in 2006 about these masses who decided on "shutting themselves in" (Jones, 2006).

Prevalence

Because there is still much uncertainty about how and what to officially diagnose as hikikomori, exact numbers are unknown and can only be estimated. According to Saito's estimate, there are about 500,000 to 1.2 million young adults who suffer from hikikomori, and

some academics believe that this number is still an underestimate (Zielanziger, 2007). However, this estimate is not based on population but comes from an expert's estimate, and must be interpreted with caution (Watts, 2002). Based on an extrapolation of a population-based survey of more than 1,600 families in 2002, there is an estimated prevalence of 410,000 (Furlong, 2008), and according to a government study of all mental health and welfare centers across Japan, there is an incidence of more than 14,000 consultations regarding hikikomori in a one year average period (Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare, 2007). However, this is most likely a severe underestimate because it only includes individuals who reported to so-called health and welfare centers and not clinics or hospitals, and because for every counted case of hikikomori there are likely several others that are undetected due to the socially isolative nature of hikikomori (Teo, 2009).

These numbers put Japanese society at peril in the coming decades. Saito asserts that because hikikomori do not work or pay tax, Japanese society may be in danger. He believes that some may be cured, but predicts that about half a million hikikomori will remain withdrawn from society for 20 or 30 years, and the government may have to support them for as long as half a century (Saito 1998). In regards to what hikikomori means for the Japanese economy, a notable proportion of the next generation of the Japanese workforce has already dropped out of the system. Japan can expect some severe labor shortages as well as a possible dependence on a welfare state to support half a million non-productive members of society over the next fifty or so years. This concern is heightened when considering that Japan has one of the lowest birth rates in the world (Head, 2004).

According to a 12-month long survey of 6,151 hikikomori cases conducted by the Ministry of Health and Labor in 2000, 8.4 percent of the total cases fell into the 10-15 year-old

age category. The 16-20 age cohort comprised 19.8 percent of the total, 21-25 comprised 20.8 percent, 26-30 comprised 18.2 percent, 31-35 comprised 10.2 percent, and those aged 36 and above only comprised 8.6 percent of the total cases (see Figure 1).

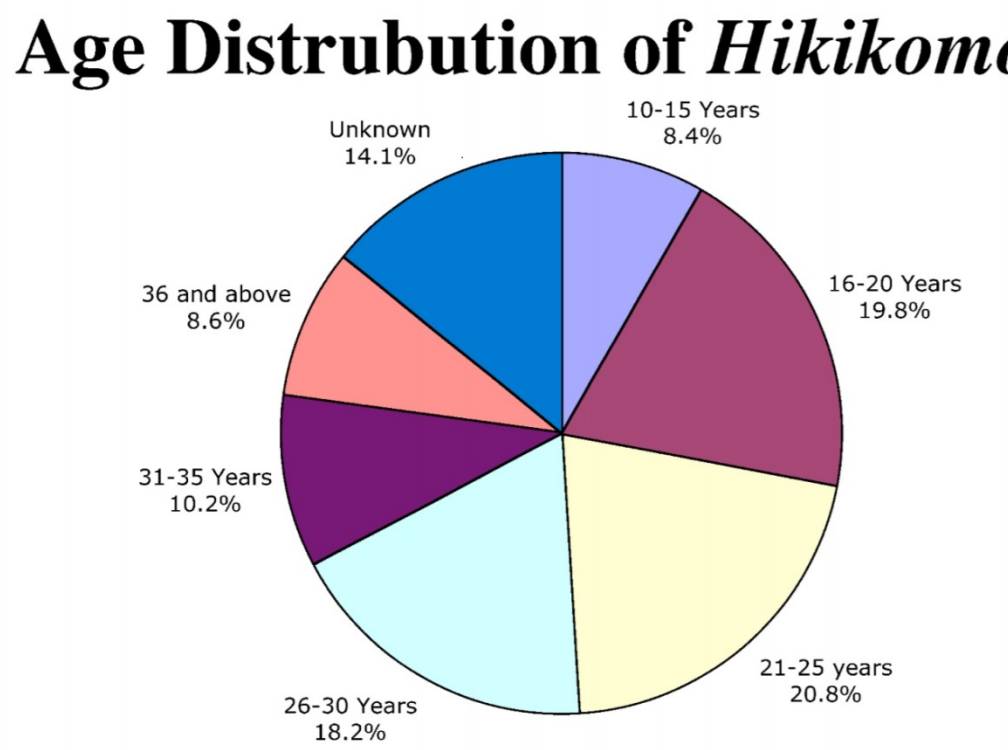

Figure I. Age Distribution of hikikomori (Ministry of Health and Labor, 2007)

These numbers seem to indicate a more troubling issue beneath popular public perception—this phenomenon could be an issue that plagues not only the youth, but is significantly prevalent in young adults and well into adulthood, possibly lasting decades. The Japanese Ministry of Health and Labor classified hikikomori as those who had spent at least six months in voluntary seclusion. However, the 2000 survey of the 6,151 cases indicates that the

average length of time in withdrawal is much longer than six months, spanning years or even decades. According to this survey, 40 percent of those diagnosed with hikikomori stay in withdrawal between 1-5 years while 7.7 percent have been in withdrawal for 10 or more years. The majority of those surveyed, 57.9 percent, was or has been in withdrawal for 5 years or less (see Figure II).

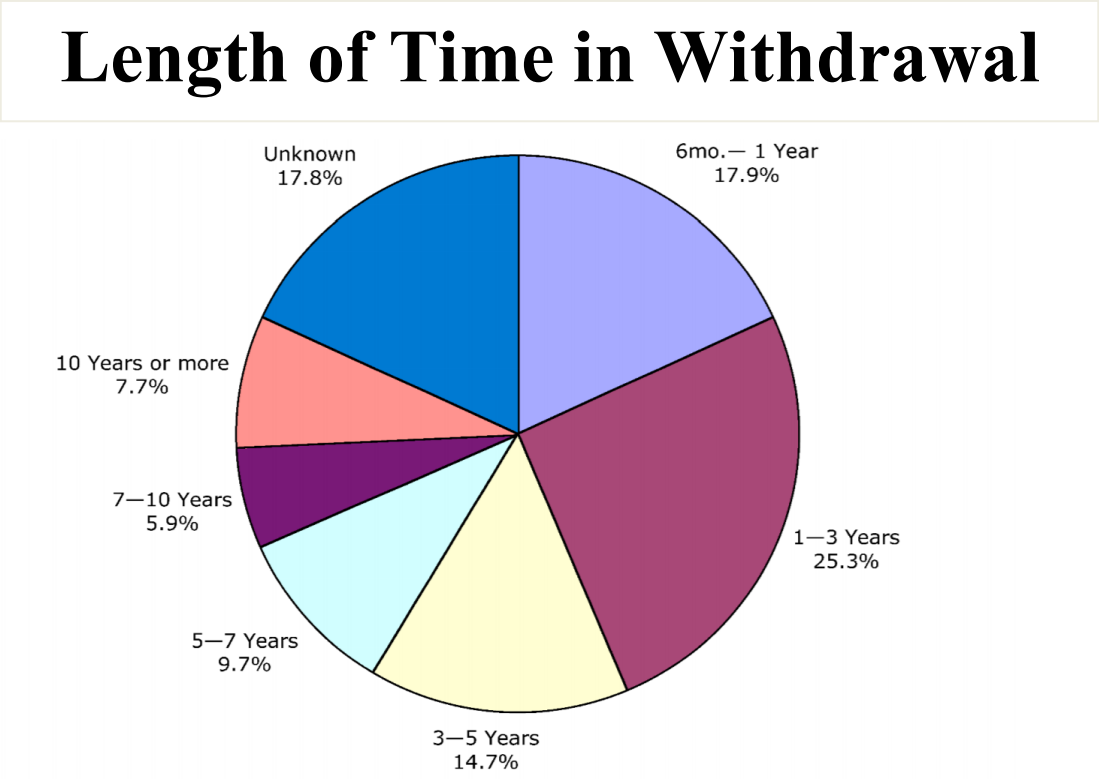

Figure II. Length Distribution of Withdrawal (Ministry of Health and Labor, 2007)

According to the first annual nationwide study from 2002 to 2010, the majority of hikikomori started withdrawing between the ages of 12 and 29, the average duration of hikikomori was 9.6 years, and the longest duration of hikikomori was 34 years (Fukushima, 2012). The typical patient is a young adult male, often the eldest child from a comfortable

socioeconomic background (Kawanishi, 2004). Although there are some cases of hikikomori being females, males make up an estimated 80 percent of individuals with hikikomori (Hikikomori, Solitary Youth of Japan), a crucial aspect of hikikomori which will be later explored.

Krieg and Dickie Model

In 2001, Alexander Krieg and Jane R. Dickie proposed a psychosocial developmental model to better understand the phenomenon (see Figure III). According to Krieg and Dickie, previous work has cited parental relationships or peer rejection as possible factors in the etiology of hikikomori, but has failed to integrate the developmental importance of attachment. Krieg and Dickie define parental rejection in terms of parental insensitivity when responding to the child, which may lead to ambivalent attachment.

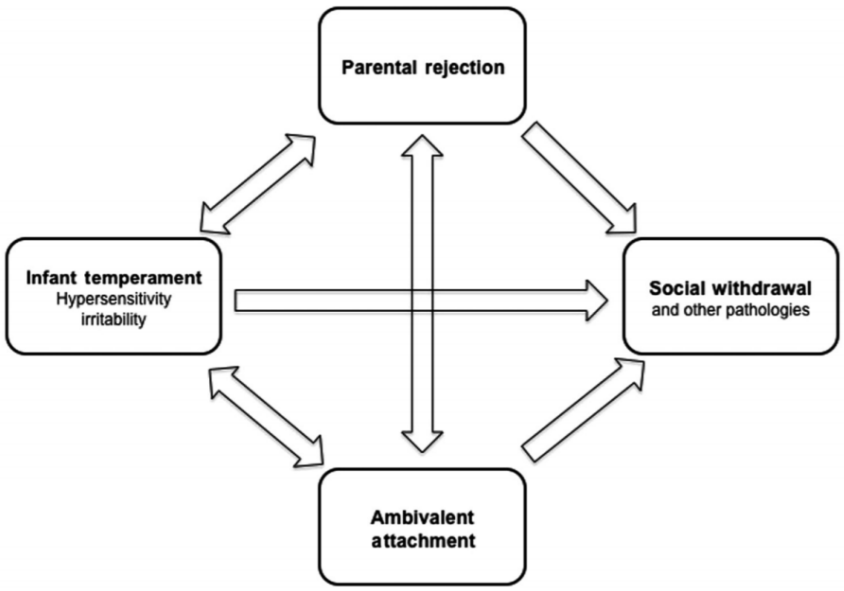

Figure III. Connections between infant temperament, parental behavior, attachment and social withdrawal (Krieg & Dickie, 2001)

In Japan, some experts believe that this disruption in the parent-child relationship is correlated with hikikomori. Attachment theory, which will be extensively examined in Chapter 4, has been helpful in understanding children's socioemotional development (Krieg & Dickie, 2001). Among the three universally established patterns of attachment (Secure, Insecure Avoidant, and Insecure Ambivalent), Ambivalent attachment is the result of inconsistent parenting sensitivity which, in turn, could be the result of the parents' own caregiving history. Krieg and Dickie also believed that the dispositional characteristic of a child, defined as infant temperament, also influences attachment style. Infant temperament, though largely biological, can influence parenting and can subsequently influence a child's experience of the attachment relationship. Together, they all result in social withdrawal. Krieg and Dickie believe that all of these elements are interconnecting factors that play essential roles in contributing to the hikikomori phenomenon. It is this view of the interrelated factors leading to hikikomori that is basis for this paper's thesis.

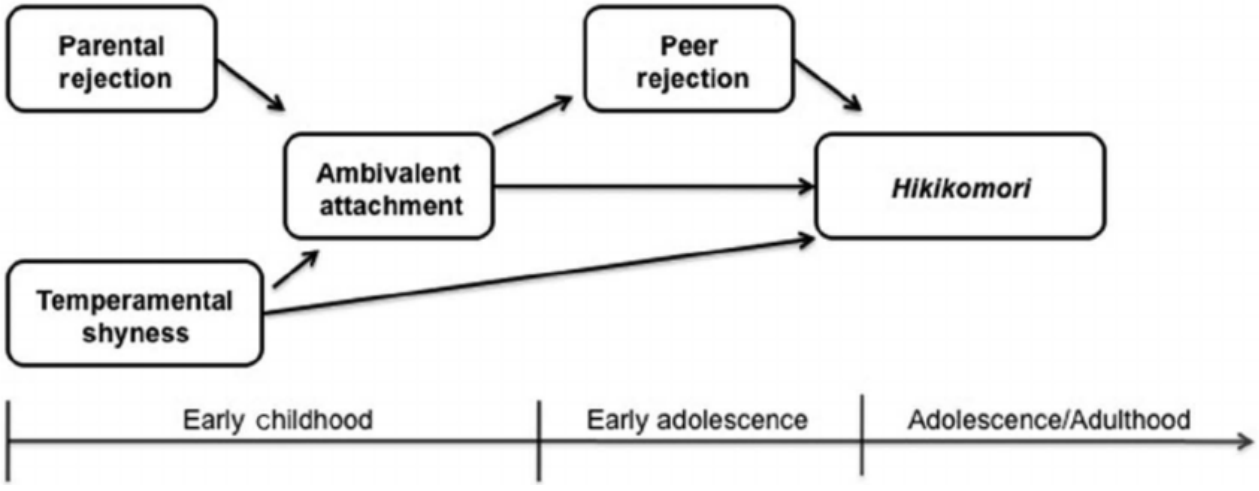

Figure IV. Psychosocial developmental model of hikikomori (Krieg & Dickie, 2001).

Figure IV reflects the proposed developmental path suggested by Kreig and Dickie. This model emphasizes the influences of attachment, dispositional temperament, and peer relationship, bringing together the earlier elements and organizing them within the context of three developmental stages: In the Early Childhood stage, we can identify the importance of dispositional characteristics, caregiving behavior, and the security of the parent-child attachment. In the Early Adolescence stage, there is a focus on acceptance by the peer group—while securely attached children with adaptive dispositional characteristics may smoothly transfer healthy attachment strategies from parent to peer, children with maladaptive dispositional characteristics and insecure attachment may struggle with peer relations (Krieg & Dickie, 2001).

Adaptations to the Krieg and Dickie Model

However, one crucial component that Krieg and Dickie's Model does not address in-depth is the consideration of how culture plays a role in the causes of hikikomori. Surely, when talking about a phenomenon that became an epidemic in a specific country, there is an implication that the phenomenon is culture-specific, as well. To an extent, hikikomori must be a culture bound syndrome. Otherwise, this condition would be easily identifiable in other countries of the world. Thus, evaluating the role of Japanese culture and the extent to which it may affect other factors is crucial to understanding the etiology of hikikomori.

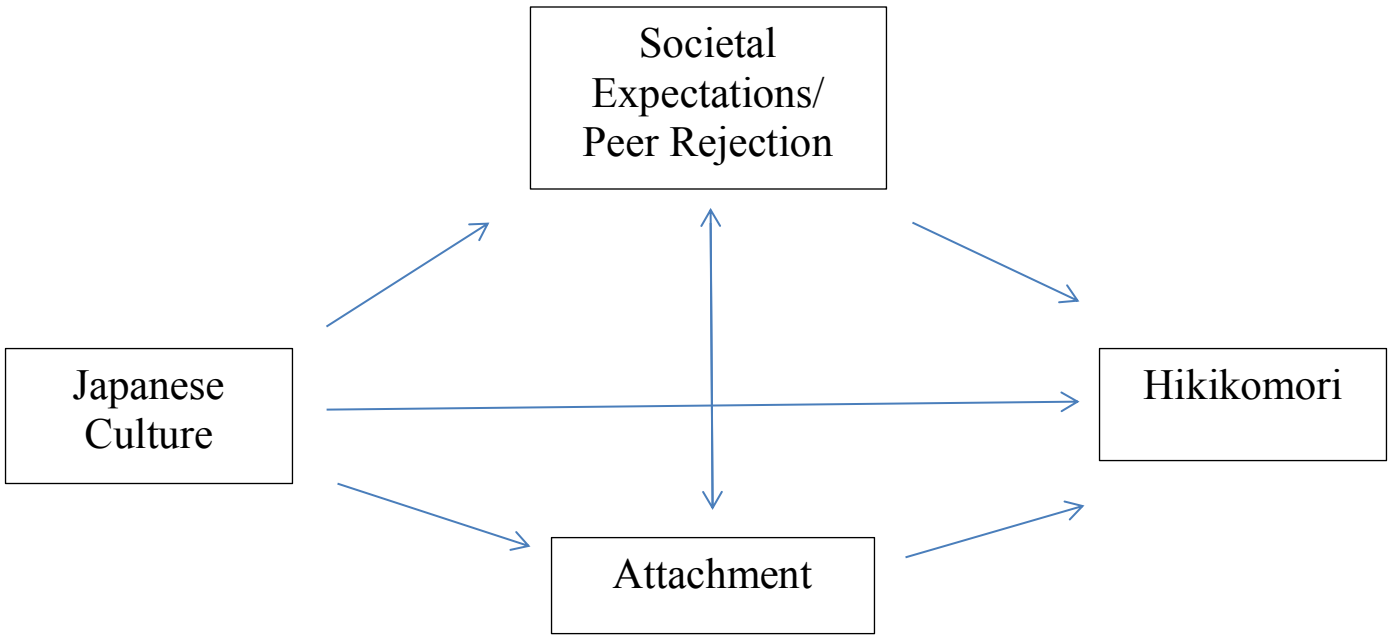

Figure V. Original adaptation model of hikikomori

This paper will introduce a new model based on Krieg and Dickie's psychosocial developmental model, incorporating culture into the process of unfolding the phenomenon (see Figure V). Because studies have shown that peer rejection is an integral part of what leads to hikikomori, peer relationships will also be discussed at length. Peer rejection in the form of bullying certainly occurs worldwide. Therefore, to explain peer rejection in the case of hikikomori, there must be a larger, more sinister factor at play than mere bullying—the pressures of societal expectation and how it affects social norms and social perception in Japan.

Lastly, Krieg and Dickie's argument that attachment is key to unravelling the phenomenon of hikikomori appears to be accurate when observing how attachment security

affects relationships and social interaction. John Bowlby (1969) proposed that the attachment relationship is an evolutionary-based universal phenomenon that facilitates offspring survival and wellbeing. However, what constitutes as wellbeing and the sort of caregiving that ensures such wellbeing may vary across cultures. Thus, culture is a crucial component in examining Japan's hikikomori phenomenon, since cultural variation may largely affect childrearing methods. In his paper, culture will be illustrated as the foundation for this social condition, affecting both societal expectation as well as attachment security. Attachment in turn affects Japanese social norms and peer relationships. Therefore, this new adaptation to the Krieg and Dickie model will analyze how cultural orientation, attachment development, and peer rejection through social expectation all play imperative roles in generating hikikomori.

Paper Structure

Since I will be using culture as the basis for the factors contributing to hikikomori, I will start the paper by introducing the relevance of culture and its variations across different groups and areas of the world. I will discuss how Japanese culture has been shaped in context of Japan's unique historical background. I will then move into how cultural aspects influence social expectations that explores why peer rejection is such a crucial component of hikikomori. I will end the discussion with how culture affects the attachment relationship, and how attachment insecurity due to these cultural aspects affects Japanese society and contribute to hikikomori. In my conclusion, I will discuss some possible solutions to the hikikomori phenomenon.

Chapter 2: Japan's Culture and its Historical Context

According to Shinto legend, the brother of sun goddess Amaterasu went on a drunken rampage. To protest, Amaterasu shut herself up in a cave with a giant rock, sealing herself off from the world and bringing darkness and death to Japan. Amaterasu could only be lured out of the cave with the efforts of millions of other gods, finally bringing light and health back to the world. Ironically, this myth is representative of the thousands of modern Japan's hikikomori shutting themselves up in their own virtual caves (Teo, 2009). This mythological tale of hikikomori's origins speaks to a larger cultural sphere surrounding the social shifts lining Japan's history.

We can think of each society having a particular culture perhaps unique to that specific group of people. Culture can include language, customs, and practices. Culture dictates social behavior, a belief system, or a set of values. These are then passed down from each generation to the next generation. Culture is a means to preserve these thoughts, traditions, and ways of life (Triandis, 2001). In other words, we can view culture as something that defines a particular society, and we can evaluate much of that society's ideology and set of values on a spectrum of culturalism. American scholar Michael Zielenziger believes that "Japan is a complex and enigmatic nation, dignified by a culture far more ancient than our own." Because the condition of hikikomori is prevalent specifically in Japan, culture must be a necessary factor that largely contributes to hikikomori. Aspects of Japanese culture are crucial in understanding hikikomori, with cultural influences affecting both societal expectations and attachment.

In this section, different regional and societal cultural orientations will be explained to weigh into our understanding of how culture may play a role in hikikomori. Japan's unique

history and Japanese culture in particular will then be explored, with attention to how cultural influence dominates all other aspects that contribute to hikikomori.

Collectivism vs. Individualism

The nature of culture requires distinctions in which particular elements of culture to adopt and how much weight to put on each one. For example, people who are part of a culture that values hierarchy are more likely to recognize elements of hierarchy than elements of aesthetics (Triandis, 2001). A simplified version of classification on the cultural spectrum involves the differences between collectivist cultures and individualistic cultures.

In collectivist cultures, people are interdependent with members of their community. They give priority to the goals of their in-groups and behave in ways that align with the group, and are especially concerned with maintaining harmonious relationships (Triandis, 2001). Collectivists focus more on the external determinants of social behavior rather than the internal, and pay more attention to the communal and situational context. Therefore, collectivists prefer methods of conflict resolution that do not destroy relationships. For example, people in collectivist cultures tend to be self-effacing in order to appear modest and humble to their in-group, which is deemed acceptable and appropriate behavior.

In comparison, people in individualist societies value autonomy and independence more than communal harmony and approval. Individualists tend to display their personal accomplishments and successes. They prioritize personal goals over the goals of the in-group. Triandis (2001) argued that people in individualist cultures—such as those of North and Western Europe and North America—exemplify elements of the personal self (e.g., "I am hardworking"), whereas people from collectivist cultures—such as those of Asia, Africa, and South America—

tend to exemplify elements of the collective self (e.g., "my family think that I am hardworking"). Because of these different values that collectivist and individualistic cultures emphasize on their respective societies, societal expectations as well as attachment relationships tend to vary across these two categories of culture.

Collectivism in Japan

What might be a reason for collectivist thought? One prominent reason might be that Asian family structures often consist of intergenerational households. In addition to the nuclear family of parents and children, grandparents and siblings may also reside in the same home, or live in close proximity of one another (Carteret, 2010). Therefore, all members of the household must adapt in order to live harmoniously with one another. This would mean living in a way that does not disrupt others sharing the environment, and interacting with each other in a way that is careful to avoid conflict or tension.

One way to look at certain differences between individualism and collectivism is through cultural tightness versus looseness. Cultural tightness is measured by the extent to which members of a culture (Pelto, 1968):

1. Agree about what constitutes correct action
2. Must behave exactly according to the norms of the culture
3. Suffer or offer severe criticism for even slight deviations from norms (such as social ostracism)

Members of collectivist cultures tend to be extremely tight. While the United States is a relatively loose culture, Japan is considered a very tight culture in which people are socialized to act properly (Triandis, 2001). In tight cultures, the members have clear ideas about what to do,

and there are only a limited number of appropriate ways to respond to a given situation. Tightness also seems to be associated with law and order, for crime rates are generally lower in tight cultures. Although the United States and Japan are both industrial and wealthy countries, the homicide rates in the United States are 9.1 times higher than in Japan (*USA Today,* 1994*)*. The concept of self-control may play a role in Japanese criminal behavior, possibly because impulse control is stressed in tight cultures (Triandis, 2001). When examining the history of Japan, we can gain a deeper understanding of how and why Japan has come to be such a collectivist culture, and the role this unique history plays in the phenomenon of withdrawal.

Tightness in Japan's Isolationism

From 1185 to 1868, Japan was ruled by the shogun, or "great general." The third shogun of the Tokugawa period (1603-1867), Tokugawa Iemitsu, enforced isolation from the rest of the world during the seventeenth century. He believed that influences from abroad such as trade, Christianity, and guns could alter the balance that existed between the shogun and feudal lords (Commodore Perry and Japan, 2009). Thus, the island of Japan was geographically and economically isolated from much of the world for two centuries.

Tightness is seen primarily in homogenous cultures that are relatively isolated from other cultures. Tight cultures have typically had an agricultural base and a high population density (Pelto, 1968). Though modern Japan is much looser in culture, Japanese history provides many examples of extreme tightness, specifically during the Tokugawa period. An American who became a Japanese naturalized citizen at the end of the nineteenth century described the Japanese individual as "completely and pitilessly sacrificed to the community," and that "the only safe rule of conduct in a Japanese settlement is to act in all things according to local custom; for the

slightest divergence from rule will be observed with disfavor" (Edgerton, 1985). During the Tokugawa period, there were hundreds of rules and commandments that were regarded as sacred. These laws specified exactly how men, women, and children were required to work, build their houses, dress, stand, walk, sit, rise, speak, breathe, eat, drink, and smile, and they were observed with compulsive attention. If the community failed to enforce these laws, it was collectively punished. These rules were so strongly internalized that they were "followed without any expression of difficulty or reluctance in doing so" (Edgerton, 1985). A person's honor and self-esteem depended on following the rules, and failure to do so shamed not only the individual but also the whole group. Because of Japan's long and unique history of isolation, Japan is historically one of the tightest cultures even perhaps among other Asian cultures. This may in turn explain why hikikomori is so prevalent specifically in Japan. It is therefore relevant to contextualize Japan's culture as a result of its long history in order to examine hikikomori from a historically cultural perspective.

Contemporary Cultural and Economic Shift

On July 8, 1853, Commodore Matthew Perry of the United States Navy sailed into Tokyo harbor on behalf of the U.S governing and demanded a treaty that would force Japan to enter trade with the United States. Tokugawa Iemitsu's fears had finally materialized—upon seeing Perry's fleet sailing into their harbor, the Japanese called them "black ships of evil [appearance]." At a military and naval disadvantage, Japan had no choice but to open its ports to U.S merchant ships (Commodore Perry and Japan, 2009). After Commodore Perry "opened" the country up to Western domination, Japan was forced into economic dependence (Hikikomori, Solitary Youth of Japan).

The Meiji era of 1868-1912 brought on rapid industrialization and economic development to Japan, opening doors for foreign influence. For two hundred and fifty years, Japan had existed as a *sakoku*—a closed country. The *sakokushugi*, or the self-induced isolationism of the island nation, had come to an end with Perry's arrival. As a result, Japan rushed into modernization, determined not to kneel at the mercy of Western invaders (Zielenziger, 2007). Japanese citizens began to realize their uniqueness relative to foreign people and cultures. Militarization was accelerated, allowing for the colonization of the neighboring islands of Asia (Takamatsu and Takai, 2019).

After Japan's crushing defeat in the Second World War, the country saw a period of humiliating dishevelment as many Japanese institutions were dismantled under U.S. occupation (Hikikomori, Solitary Youth of Japan). Slowly, Japan picked up its economic and social pieces. As understanding of cultural anthropology began to grow, Japanese psychologists and anthropologists collaborated to expand on indigenous studies of the Japanese in the 1960s and 1970s. These efforts eventually led to the rise of *nihonjinron,* or *Japanology,* which aimed to study the unique psyche of the Japanese people. The idea of *nihonjinron* piqued the interest of the Japanese people, and often glorified Japanese-ness as the reason for Japan's magnificent economic recovery and success from the desolation of The Second World War (Sofue, Suye, & Murakami, 1958).

The post-World War II era brought on a fast-paced social change to Japan. As Western influence became more prominent in family structures, urbanization and suburban sprawl affected population shifts, and technology emerged as the norm, Japanese culture was caught between redressing humiliation and the Japanese character of "cooperative stoicism." (Hikikomori, Solitary Youth of Japan). However, aspects of Japan's traditional culture were not

necessarily breaking down, but shifting to adapt to a new global age. Thus, Japan's unique historical and cultural background is a key factor in cultivating the necessary environment in which the hikikomori phenomenon was able to take off post World War II. In line with Japan's cultural tightness, it is of little doubt that the high-stress pressure of measuring up to Japan's societal expectations is the next key factor that makes up the hikikomori experience.

Chapter 3: Cultural Influence on Societal Expectation and Peer Rejection

Psycho-cultural anthropologist Sugiyama-Lebra (1976) deemed that Japanese people possess four facets of self: *omote* (表=front) , *ura* (裏=back), *uchi* (内=inner),and *soto* (外=outer). The *omote* refers to the public self that is presented to others—a "front" face. The *ura,* or back, is the private self that is hidden from public view. The *uchi* is the self that is reserved for the presence of in-group or people of intimacy and comfort, whereas the *soto* is the self that is presented specifically in front of out-groups or strangers. These various faces are carefully compartmentalized and displayed only in specific social contexts or when it is socially appropriate. For the Japanese, this emphasis on the self within specific social contexts is the core principle of all interactions and relationships with others. Thus, societal harmony and appropriate social demeanor are not only expected, but are cultural necessities in order to fit into the social surround.

As discussed in Chapter 1, Japan's history of cultural tightness ties into established rules of social conduct and a strong aversion to social divergence. In this chapter, I will present another key component that constitutes the hikikomori phenomenon—societal expectation and peer rejection. First, I will discuss the effects of Japan's economic collapse during the 1990s and the resulting pressures that the recession brought to Japanese society—specifically, on a society that places strong emphasis on social structure and masculinity. Next, I will examine an aspect that almost all hikikomori have in common: the failure to "fit in" with their peers and their social surround, and the effects that this peer rejection has in a society that values social harmony above all else.

Dimensions of Social Structure in a Culture

In the late 1960's and early 1970's, Dutch social psychologist Geert Hofstede conducted a survey of over 100,000 IBM employees across 40 different counties, which was later expanded to include 53 counties and regions (Hofstede, 1980). According to his data analysis, there are four basic dimensions of national culture:

1. Power distance
2. Individualism/collectivism
3. Uncertainty avoidance
4. Masculinity/femininity

Power distance describes the society's values that reflect the importance of equal distribution of power, wealth, and other factors, such as beliefs regarding the degree of power superiors should hold over subordinates in the work context; countries in which people believe that superiors should have a large degree of power would rank high on power distance while counties in which people believe superiors should allow greater freedom to subordinates would rank lower on power distance. As discussed in Chapter 1, individualism/collectivism addresses a focus on individuals and their families versus an in-group; members of individualistic cultures prioritize personal interests and goals while members of collectivist cultures prioritize in-group goals and are willing to give up some personal freedom in exchange for security and protection by the group. Uncertainty avoidance describes the extent to which members of a culture are able to accept ambiguous and uncertain situations; cultures that score highly in uncertainty avoidance develop detailed systems of rules and procedures and its members are expected to strictly adhere to such systems, whereas cultures that have a low score in uncertainty avoidance only have the minimum necessary rules set in place and foster a higher tolerance for deviance or innovation.

Masculinity/femininity captures how much a given culture emphasizes aggressiveness, achievement, and material success; in a masculine culture, these characteristics are strongly emphasized whereas in a feminine culture, quality of life and relationships are more highly valued. Hofstede's comparisons found that the cultures of Japan and the United States were opposites in many ways—Japan was identified as a collectivist, high power distance, high uncertainty avoidance, and highly masculine country whereas the United States was identified as an individualist, low power distance, low uncertainty avoidance, and moderately masculine country (Hofstede, 1980).

According to Hofstede Insights, an online consulting and training company that aims to align culture and strategy, Japan is one of the most masculine societies in the world, at a score of 95. There is severe competition between groups: children are conditioned to compete on sports day from a young age, and corporate employees are motivated to win against competitors—of course, masculinity is also expressed by the notorious workaholism prevalent among the Japanese as a result of their belief in the ideal "salaryman." Japan emphasizes the concept of *monodukuri*—the drive for excellence and perfection in material production, services, and presentation in every aspect of life. In comparison, the United States scores a 62 on masculinity, explained by the combination of a high masculinity drive and a high sense of individualism. Americans are taught to strive to be the best they can be, and the widespread "winner takes all" mentality encourages them to display their successes and life achievements freely. Thus, being successful is not necessarily the greatest motivator for Americans, but rather, it is the ability to show off one's success (Hofstede Insights, 2017).

At the below-average score of 46 on the Uncertainty Avoidance scale, the United States also tends to be open and accepting of new ideas and innovative products. There is a fair

willingness to try something new and a wider tolerance of opinion and freedom of expression. However, when it comes to emotional expressivity, Americans tend to be less emotionally expressive than higher-scoring cultures and do not require as many rules. After the occurrence of 9/11 however, there have been stricter measures to monitor and enforce security out of national fear. Americans tend to possess a "can-do" mentality that fosters the belief that there is always the possibility to do things in a better way. In comparison to the United States, Japan is one of the most uncertainty avoiding counties in the world at a high score of 92. This is perhaps due to Japan's constant threat by natural disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis, and volcano eruptions, and the Japanese have learned to prepare themselves well for any uncertain situation or circumstance. This sense of planning and precaution extends into every other aspect of society, and the prescription for maximum predictability is reflected through highly ritualized ceremonies, expected conduct, and detailed etiquette. In the Japanese corporate world, a lot of time and effort is dedicated to deciding feasibility and logistics, and all risk factors must be taken into account in minute detail before any project can start or be approved by a manager. As a consequence, this deeply ingrained necessity for uncertainty avoidance may largely contribute to the difficulties in realizing and implementing any socio-cultural change in Japan (Hofstede Insights, 2017).

Economic Collapse and Japan's "Lost Decade"

According to Zielenziger, Japan's unique civilization "rocketed into the modern world without acquiring the same values, norms, and modes of thinking most inhabitants of advanced and prosperous nations today associate with modernity." In the decades following the Second World War, Japan transformed from a country ravaged by war to a highly prosperous and

technologically advanced society. As will be discussed later in this chapter, much of this prosperity was due to the labor and diligence of the "salaryman" and his image as the masculine ideal (Dasgupta, 2013).

This prosperity was abruptly halted when Japan's bubble economy collapsed during the 1990s, resulting in what is commonly referred to as Japan's "Lost Decade." The international assessment of Japan's employment system underwent a huge change—Japanese companies were confronted by the increasing challenges of globalization and mounting debt, and the companies continued to stagnate in the midst of failure to make flexible or rapid decisions. Moreover, youth employment rates have risen sharply since the late 1990s—the average annual unemployment rate for males under the age of 25 exceeded 10 percent between 1999 and 2000. The Japanese unemployment rate—particularly for workers in their twenties—has now surpassed that of the United States.

One reason why youth unemployment is not taken more seriously in Japan is that most unemployment among young people is thought to be voluntary. Job-hopping Japanese are often referred to as "freeters," a combination of the word "freelance" and "*arbeiter"* (the German word for "worker"). In political discussion, freeters are frequently bundled together with NEETS (Hammond & Kremer, 2013). These "freeters," also known as "parasite singles," often live with their parents and have part-time jobs or are unemployed. Psychologist Yamada Masahiro defines a parasite single as "an unmarried child who lives with his or her parents even after graduation and is dependent on them for his or her basic living conditions," and claims that the increasing number of parasite singles in Japan is the primary reason behind Japan's increasing trend toward later marriages and decline in birthrate. In fact, international comparisons indicate that Japan has the highest percentage of single young adults living with

their parents (Genda, 2005). Unlike hikikomori, however, freeters are not characterized by their reclusiveness and complete withdrawal from society. Rather, freeters often desire full-time jobs but have difficulty finding them for a variety of reasons (Rahardjo, 2013). Nevertheless, the image of the "parasite single" is generally a negative one, and freeters are often viewed as lazy and disgraceful (Genda, 2005). The older generation of the 1960s and 1970s during the post-war economy boom could not relate to the struggles of NEETS, freeters, and hikikomori and came to see unemployment among youth as a result of the good-for-nothing younger generation leeching off of the flagging Japanese economy (Hammond & Kremer, 2013).

Since the bubble economy collapse of the 1990s, the parasite single phenomenon has been steadily increasing, much like the hikikomori phenomenon. Although freeters are classified separately from hikikomori, both are largely indicative of the Japan's socio-economic changes in recent decades. Opinion polls on the future of Japan conducted at the end of the twentieth century elicited widely pessimistic responses, and it is evident that despair about the future is deeply rooted among Japanese youth (Genda, 2005). There seems to be an enormous disparity between the myth of post-war work for success and the grim reality of Japan's post-boom society, perpetuating a troubling sense of uncertainty and hopelessness among the young population. It is evident that high-pressure societal expectations placed on the youth by those who believe in the post-war belief in the salaryman and the long-standing ideal of cultural tightness have taken a toll on Japanese youth.

Hyper-Masculinity in Japan and the Salaryman

One such societal expectation is Japan's assumption of the traditional male hegemonic model. In the aftermath of World War II, Japanese workplace and family structures were largely defined by the idea of the nuclear family. Women were expected to stay at home and act as the

homemaker while men were expected to enter the workforce as the salaryman, or full-time breadwinner (Rahardjo, 2013). Following international economic success, the salaryman soon became seen as the primary hegemonic model of masculinity and the symbol of masculine power for decades to come (Dasgupta, 2013 and Rahardjo, 2013). The life of the salaryman was difficult and involved long hours and extreme dedication to the company. Yet many believed that the benefits of the salaryman were worth the toil— benefits of lifetime employment ensured salarymen job security up until retirement, and many saw the ability to provide for their families as an honor and a necessity (Rahardjo, 2013). In this way, Japan became a hyper-masculine culture that placed a lot of value—and pressure—on work and prosperity. The salaryman became not only a societal expectation for men, but a form of identity associated with dignity and reverence. In 1963, Ezra Vogel wrote that "the young Japanese girl hopes to marry a salary man" while "the new order of the salary man is not only a way of life for people in large organizations, but a model affecting the life of others" (Vogel, 1971). In 1995, Fujimura-Fanselow and Kameda describe the image of the typical Japanese man—held by people both inside and outside of Japan—as that of

> a workaholic who toils long hours for Mitsubishi or Sony or some other large corporation, goes out drinking with his fellow workers or clients after work and plays golf with them on weekends, and rarely spends much time at home with his wife and children, much less does anything around the house, such as cleaning or changing diapers (1995).

It is no surprise, then, that the collapse of the bubble economy during the 1990s highly impacted Japan's socio-cultural structure. The collapse not only affected the Japanese economy, but it also shattered the highly idealized notion of the salaryman. Massive layoffs and the decline of workplace benefits forced the loss of job stability and prosperity, and this younger generation

of workers was forced to desperately fight for their jobs and "run like mad to stay in place" (Rahardjo, 2013). Thus, the vital component of the salaryman became bruised—the masculine image. As a result, the masculine construction of the salaryman began to fall apart, leaving Japanese workers feeling emasculated, powerless, and hopeless. "After World War II, Japanese only knew a certain kind of salaryman future," says Mariko Fujiwara, director of research at the Hakuhodo Institute of Life and Living in Tokyo. "Those post-World War II salarymen who worked so tirelessly were at least rewarded with the security of lifetime employment. It was simple in my youth—you went to high school, then to the University of Tokyo (Japan's most prestigious university), and then you got a job in a major corporation. That's where you grew up. The corporation took care of you for the rest of your life." Fujiwara believes that now, the Japanese "lack the imagination and the creativity to think about the world in a new way" in a modern-day leaner global economy that demands skills such as independent thinking, communication, and entrepreneurship that many parents and schools don't teach. Thus, boys have been educated their entire young lives preparing them for a work system that has shriveled, causing them to feel inadequate and stuck (Jones, 2006). Because they have not met society's expectations, their perception of self is greatly affected. They feel ashamed that they are unable to display the expected outward "face," further causing them to feel alienated and incompetent.

Following the economy collapse, the nagging sense of job insecurity within Japanese companies has resulted in workers laboring even harder than before, causing fast burnout and perpetuating the gender divide and feelings of masculine insecurity. Workers often work long hours overtime or refuse to use their paid holidays because they do not want the company to view them as lazy or uncommitted to their work, and there is always a persistent fear of not living up to the expectations of the salaryman (Rahardjo, 2013). This need to work causes men to

spend all of their time at the office, further widening the gap between home and the workplace and perpetuating gender norms and sex roles in Japanese society. It is of no insignificance that the vast majority of hikikomori are male. It is evident that in this post-boom era, the Japanese are still struggling to come to terms with the changing notion of the salaryman and to re-evaluate former conceptions of masculinity. Hikikomori's widespread appearance starting in the 1990s attests to the ties between Japanese masculinity and work stability. Hence, it should be recognized that hikikomori is largely a male problem, and much of the problem seems to be caused by the expectations placed upon young men from an early age to be successful and acquire jobs in order to support not only himself, but also his family, as is Japanese tradition and cultural norm.

Peer Rejection and Bullying

On January 13, 1993, thirteen-year-old Yuhei Komoda was found dead, suffocated in a closet. Prior to his death, he had been bullied, jeered at, and shoved around by a crowd of classmates as dozens of other students watched. Although it is not known if Yuhei directly provoked his classmates, his failure to meet the in-group's expectations earned him the abuse from his classmates—Yuhei stood out from the rest of his peers because he had been a newcomer from Tokyo, where his father had studied. Yuhei's crimes in the eyes of his peers consisted of "speaking standard Japanese instead of the local dialect, coming from a wealthy home, and being part of the group in a society that demands conformity." Yet interestingly, the townspeople did not focus on Yuhei's death or the crimes of his peer when news broke of the bullying incident. Rather, the focus was on feeling sorry for the boys who committed the crime (Triandis, 2001).

As discussed in Chapter 1, Japan has a long history of cultural tightness; any divergence from the local custom was viewed with great disfavor. In nineteenth century Japan, the samurai were permitted to kill anyone of lower status whose behavior was "unexpected" or out of the ordinary (Edgerton, 1985). Japanese psychologist Imai (1990) conducted analysis of primary school textbooks and discovered that Japanese students were subjected to content pertaining to interpersonal harmony, rule compliant, and self-sacrifice more so than their American counterparts, who were more likely to be exposed to equality, freedom, independence, self-assertion, and strong will. Psychologist Hisako Watanabe believes that the post-war Japanese mindset that strived for success has much to do with the ways in which schools are set up. In 1985, psychologists observed teaching and learning activities in classrooms to examine how Japanese children differed in their learning perceptions and behaviors compared to American children. Their data indicated that Japanese students tended to attribute their success or failure on mathematics tests to their amount of effort, whereas American students attributed their success or failure to their ability. This finding perhaps implies that the Japanese children perceived success in mathematics tests as a measure of self-worth, as they believe that their failure was entirely in their conscious control (Takamatsu & Taki, 2019). In relation to the theory of Japanese cultural self, Japanese college student samples were more likely than American college student samples to undergo the process of identity formation through comparing themselves with their peers. This was especially the case when the students' interdependent selves are salient (Takata, 1993).

There is often an aversive or traumatic childhood experience among hikikomori, and the most often cited example is difficulty in school. Bullying is a prominent social problem in Japan, and hikikomori often recall being taunted, shunned, or physically abused by peers (Teo, 2009). This bullying, called *ijime,* commonly occurs when a person does not "fit in." *Ijime* takes many

forms—it can include beatings, exclusion from the peer group, and desecration of school uniforms (Triandis, 2001). Japanese authorities define bullying as follows:

> to inflict pain by physical attacks against one or sometimes several specially selected people; to intimidate another by speech or action to harass; to inflict repeated or intermittent psychological pressures by excluding or ignoring a person(s) in a group setting (*Keisatsu hakusho*, 1986).

In addition to verbal and physical abuse, social ostracism is a key component of bullying. Ostracism, known as *mura hachibu,* has been historically used as a legitimized means to control nonconformist and uncooperative people in Japanese society. Among children, exclusion from the group is called *nakama hazure,* meaning that one is an "outsider" even within that individual's own group (Smith, 1961). Most victims of bullying are smaller, weaker, younger than, or "different" from the bullies, and can include students who transfer from other schools or Japanese students who return to Japan after having lived abroad for several years. Perceived physical, racial, linguistic, ethnic, and other differences are reasons why many children are targets of bullying and social exclusion (Shwalb & Shwalb, 1996).

Many hikikomori describe their experiences during their school years when they did not or could not conform to the norm—they were bullied for being too fat, too shy, too "girly," or even too good at sports or music. One hikikomori was bullied in the fifth grade because he was better in baseball than everyone else even though he had not been playing as long as his teammates. In accordance with the Japanese saying, "The nail that sticks out gets hammered in" (Jones, 2009).

Many teachers and even parents, though aware of bullying among their students or children, ignore or tolerate the behavior because they believe that children should resolve their

own interpersonal problems. Whereas American figures of authority are quick to dispel aggression and bullying in children, Japanese teachers hesitate to interfere for fear that their intervention may exacerbate the behavior. Thus, teachers often tacitly allow bullying to develop and persist among children. Certain Japanese cultural values may contribute to children's hesitance to report bullying, such as the silent endurance of pain and adversity, emphasis on harmonious relationships, and reluctance to oppose one's group for fear of further possible exclusion (Shwalb & Shwalb, 1996).

Because the readiness of group members to identify with and contribute to collective goals is a central feature of Japanese group processes, collective identity is essential to a child's socialization. Groups in Japan provide their members with a sense of belonging and acceptance, and indicate loyalty and commitment. As a result of this collective identity, Japanese individuals tend to form strong emotional bonds with their in-group and are enabled to adopt the goals of the group as their own, fostering a sense of personal pride and achievement in attaining these collective goals. This group orientation is the product of a socialization process that begins in early childhood and is reinforced throughout the individual's lifetime, especially though the schooling experience that begins with entry into preschool. Bullying has also been attributed to competitive examinations, rigid administrative control in the schools, and a social system in which members of the majority group use membership to enhance their identity at the expense of others. Psychological studies indicate that children who have experienced bullying from parents, siblings, or friends displace their own painful experiences onto even weaker children (Rohelm & LeTendre, 1999). To the Japanese, bullying by peers because one does not fit in with the norms of society and the school environment is an indication of the failure to be in step with this socialization process. Because self-identity is inextricably connected with group membership and

group identity in Japan, social exclusion can be psychologically devastating to the Japanese. Thus, bullying in Japan holds a deeper meaning and carries more weight than would in other countries and cultures, and perhaps affects children more negatively than would in other cultures, largely indicating this type of bullying as a socio-cultural problem that greatly contributes to the hikikomori phenomenon.

Futoukou, or the refusal to attend school, is the most common diagnosis in child and adolescent psychiatry in Japan (Honjo, Kasahara, & Ohtaka, 1992). Many Japanese children drop out of school before high school due to persistent bullying, and this problem has steadily increased. In 1996, 75,000 junior high school students—roughly 1.65 percent of students—had skipped thirty days or more of class to avoid bullying. In 2005, this number has increased to an alarming 2 percent for students who refused to go to school entirely (Zielenziger, 2007).

In the case of T.M., a nineteen-year-old hikikomori, the young high schooler dropped out of school for lack of motivation although his academic track record and performance had been good. In middle school, he often skipped school and avoided mingling with peers, which he linked to experiences of bullying by classmates in elementary school. T.M. has hardly left his room in two years and spends 23 hours a day behind closed doors. He eats food made by his mother who leaves trays outside his bedroom, sleeps all day, and then wakes up in the evening to surf the internet, chat on online bulletin boards, read manga (comic books), and play video games (Teo, 2009).

Another hikikomori, Kenta, was ostracized for failing to meet society's expectations for masculinity. Kenta recalled that he had been bullied at school for his high-pitched voice, and his peers made fun of him for having more female friends than male friends. He related his

shortcomings as the ideal masculine figure with weakness, and explained, “Our society is very tough on the weak” (Martyn-Hemphill, 2019).

For the hikikomori Hide, the problems started when he gave up school. "I started to blame myself and my parents also blamed me for not going to school. The pressure started to build up," he says. "Then, gradually, I became afraid to go out and fearful of meeting people. And then I couldn't get out of my house." He eventually stopped all communication with friends and even his parents, sleeping through the day and watching television all night to avoid communicating with them. "I had all kinds of negative emotions inside me," he says. "The desire to go outside, anger towards society and my parents, sadness about having this condition, fear about what would happen in the future, and jealousy towards the people who were leading normal lives” (Hammond & Kremer, 2013).

Results of Societal Pressure

Sekentei, a person’s reputation in the community and the pressure he or she feels to impress others, is a powerful force that perpetuates the stigma around breaking social norms and expectations (Hammond & Kremer, 2013). In many cases of hikikomori, there are episodes of “defeat without a struggle” that precede the onset of the hikikomori condition. For example, a child might quit the school volleyball team because he was not selected a player or give up taking an entrance examination after having prepared for it, and avoid all competitive settings. In other words, Hikikomori tend to depart from the “envisioned ideal path” without having struggled for what they wanted. Because there was no process of struggle and fail, this “envisioned path” remains with them after they become hikikomori and they feel uncomfortable with themselves for not being on that path, perhaps creating a self-defeating bias (Suwa &

Suzuki, 2013). This agitation is perhaps heightened when considering Japanese students' tendency to attribute their failure to effort rather than ability.

The prized Japanese idea of the self, then, originates from the desires of others rather than in one's own desire. The "envisioned ideal path" is the ideal of the self is not an ideal that they have cultivated based on their own passions or longing, but an ideal that comes from the desire to appease the opinions of others. They create their ideal image based on others' expectations and are unable to hold onto their own goals or ideals. As a result, they give up on the desire to work toward those ideals because it had never truly risen in them in an organic way, creating a lack of agency and motivation. Because they had not "struggled and lost" which would have motivated them to seek a new path, the gap between their ideal self and actual self becomes even larger. They continue to want to show others their envisioned ideal self, and become frustrated when they are not able to (Suwa & Suzuki, 2013).

Although hikikomori barricade themselves in their rooms, they are also widely known to display angry outbursts and acts of violence. One in five hikikomori admit to violent behavior such as punching holes in the walls of their room or lashing out violently at family members (Ministry of Health Labor and Welfare, 2007). During his interview, Kenta admitted, "One time I got violent and my parents had to call the police." Mr. Haruto, the father of another hikikomori, said that his son—who became a hikikomori as a teenager and still barely leaves his room two decades later—often displayed violent outbursts. "Once he punched a window," he recalled, "and another time, he punched my wife and broke her ribs" (Martyn-Hemphill, 2019). The pervasiveness of violent behavior attests to the anger and frustration that hikikomori feel and the inability to properly express their frustrations.

Because they do not work, are closed off to society, cause disruption, and do not fit the mold of communal harmony and ideas of masculinity, those affected by the hikikomori condition naturally act as a stark contrast to the traditional hegemonic model of the salaryman as well as the socio-cultural expectations of Japanese society. The longer hikikomori remain distanced from society, the more aware they become of their failure to meet societal expectations. As a result, they further lose self-esteem and confidence and become even more terrified by the prospect of leaving home (Hammond & Kremer, 2013). The social pressures of Japanese society clearly have a negative impact on children who see no other choice but to withdraw, yet it is also these social pressures that prevent hikikomori from changing their views of the world and of the self. Thus, the hikikomori phenomenon becomes an inescapable cycle of negative feedback: feelings of shame and inadequacy lead to withdrawal, which continues to reinforce feelings of shame and inadequacy.

In the next section, I will examine how early attachment relationships also contribute to how one sees oneself in relation to others. I will explore how culture influences caregiving practices and childrearing methods that create these attachment relationships.

Chapter 4: Cultural Influence on Attachment

Psychoanalyst John Bowlby described attachment as a deep and enduring emotional bond that connects one person to another across time and space. He claimed that this bond stems from an evolutionary basis and is universally found. Bowlby believed that an individual's mental health and behavior problems could be attributed to early childhood experiences seeking security from caregivers. Such caregiving behaviors leading to feelings of safety include responding sensitively and appropriately to the child's needs (Bowlby, 1969).

The child's attachment relationship with his or her primary caregiver leads to the development of an "internal working model," which acts as a cognitive framework of mental representations for understanding the world, the self, and others. Memories and expectations from the internal working model guide a person's interactions with parental attachment figures ad eventually with attachment figures outside of the family (Bretherton & Munholland, 1999). According to Bowlby, such behavior has an evolutionary basis that is shared with nonhumans, and is therefore universal across cultures (Bowlby, 1969). However, this has been a topic of debate—attachment patterns may vary cross-culturally in accordance with a culture's values or the aspects of childrearing that the culture chooses to emphasize. In this chapter, I will define these patterns and behavior in terms of John Bowlby's Attachment Theory. First, I will establish the fundamentals of Attachment Theory and explore how the theory came to be from its evolutionary roots. Next, I will examine attachment across cultures and explore how Japanese

culture affects childrearing and attachment—the third key component of the hikikomori phenomenon.

Maternal Deprivation and How Attachment Affects Later Relationships

In the early 1940s, a number of significant studies were undertaken to observe the effects of maternal deprivation and mother-child relationship, among which included the disturbing effects of the separation of young children from their mothers as a result of war dislocation. There were documentations of the sweeping and at times irreversible psychological consequences arising from institutional placements with inadequate or lacking maternal care during the first year of a child's life—distortion in intellectual, emotional, social, and physical aspects of growth and development appeared in infants who were continuingly deprived, with serious depression appearing in others separated from their mothers during the latter part of the second half-year of life. During this period, a number of workers including Bowlby recognized the frequent later appearance of deep and pervasive character disorders with delinquent behavioral manifestations in children that were so severely deprived (World Health Organization, 1962).

Bowlby was certain that the prolonged deprivation of a young child of maternal care would have great and far-reaching effects on a child's character and on the whole of the child's future life. He concluded that the proper care of children deprived of a normal home life is not merely an art of common humanity, but essential to the mental and social welfare of a community. Bowlby's evidence indicated likelihood of serious personality disturbance, manifested by shallow relationships, difficulties in impulse control, and at times limitations in cognitive and perceptual functions, arising from prolonged institutionalization or frequent foster-home placement in early childhood. Bowlby states,

> Prolonged breaks [in the mother-child relationship] during the first three years of life leave a characteristic impression on the child's personality. Clinically such children appear emotionally withdrawn and isolated. They fail to develop libidinal ties with other children or with adults and consequently have no friendships worth the name (Bowlby, 1952).

Thus, Bowlby's studies and observations influenced how he came to view and understand attachment in evolutionary terms and eventually paved the way for the establishment of Attachment Theory.

Attachment Theory

Attachment theory in psychology originates with the seminal work of John Bowlby as well as from the contributions of psychologist Mary Ainsworth, and explains how the parent-child relationship emerges and influences a child's subsequent development. While Bowlby was working as a psychiatrist in a Child Guidance Clinic in London in the 1930s, his experience treating emotionally disturbed children led him to consider the importance of the child's relationship with his or her mother in terms of his or her social, emotional, and cognitive development. This experience shaped his belief about the link between early infant separations with the mother and later maladjustment, and his findings led him to formulate his attachment theory (Bretherton, 1992).

Bowlby proposed that attachment is adaptive, and can be understood within an evolutionary context in that the caregiver provides safety and security for the infant, enhancing the infant's chance of survival (Bowlby, 1958). The attachment figure would act as a secure base for exploring the child's surroundings and making sense of the world. Furthermore, the attachment relationship would act as a prototype for all future social relationships. Thus, disrupting the process of attachment would have severe consequences. Bowlby suggested that

there is initially only one primary attachment that would form between a caregiver and a child, known as monotropy. This theory suggests that there is a critical period for developing an attachment—about 1-5 years. If an attachment has not developed during this time, then the child will suffer from irreversible developmental consequences such as stunted intelligence and heightened aggression (Bretherton, 1992).

Expanding on psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud's theory that mature human sexuality is made up of component instincts, Bowlby suggested that infants' attachment behavior is comprised of a number of component instinctual responses—such as sucking, clinging, and following as well as signaling behaviors such as smiling and crying—that functions to bind the infant to the mother and vice versa. These responses mature relatively independently during the infant's first year of life and become increasingly integrated and focused on a mother figure during the second six months (Bretherton, 1992).

Bowlby begins the groundwork for his theory by noting that organisms at different levels of the phylogenetic scale regulate instinctive behavior in distinct ways ranging from primitive reflex-like "fixed action patterns" to complex plan hierarchies. He defines attachment behavior as having its own motivation, claiming that it is not derived from systems serving mating and feeding (Bretherton, 1992). Once attached, locomotor infants then use the attachment figure as a secure base for exploration of the environment and as a safe haven that they can return to for reassurance (Schaffer & Emerson, 1964). The quality of social interaction determines how effectively the attachment figure can serve in these roles, especially in the attachment figure's sensitivity to the infant's signals. Bowlby comments,

> When interaction between a couple runs smoothly, each party manifests intense pleasure in the other's company and especially in the other's expression of affection. Conversely,

> whenever interaction results in persistent conflict each party is likely on occasion to exhibit intense anxiety or unhappiness, especially when the other is rejecting. Proximity and affectionate interchange are appraised and felt as pleasurable by both, whereas distance and expressions of rejection are appraised as disagreeable or painful by both (Bowlby, 1969).

Moreover, Bowlby expounds on the role of internal working models in the intergenerational transmission of attachment patterns—individuals who grow up to become relatively stable and self-reliant usually have parental figures who are supportive and responsive when called upon, yet still permit and encourage autonomy. Such parents tend to engage in fairly frank communication of their own working models of the self, of their child, and of others. Moreover, this also indicates to the child that these working models are open to questioning and revision (Bretherton, 1992).

Since the establishment of Bowlby's Attachment Theory, Bowlby's conclusions have been subjected to a considerable amount of criticism by those who have different opinions on the problem of maternal deprivation. It is also worth noting that Bowlby's original studies were limited to countries of Western Europe and North America. For example, he was largely unable to incorporate in this theory the experiences of deprivation in Eastern European countries, where the changes in the social role of women have been even more pronounced than in the West. Moreover, knowledge is lacking of deprivation in other countries of the world where the cultural situation and the status of women are totally different than in the West, nor have factors such as paternal deprivation and its interaction with maternal deprivation been extensively or fully explored (World Health Organization, 1962).

Mary Ainsworth and the Strange Situation Classification

Through the revelations of ethological studies of infant-mother relationships, John Bowlby believed that attachment was an all-or-nothing process. However, further research has indicated that there are individual differences in attachment quality. These individual differences still indicate that attachment is an all-or-nothing process, but suggest that a child can be attached in secure and non-secure ways. Around the same time that Bowlby was cataloging infant behaviors revealing the development of an attachment relationship, psychologist Mary Ainsworth was also studying infant-mother relationship for the importance of security in an individual's attachment (Ainsworth & Bell, 1970).

Mary Salter, six years younger than Bowlby, finished graduate study at the University of Toronto just before the outbreak of World War II. Similar to Bowlby's, her professional career was primarily shaped by her duties as a military officer during World War II in the Canadian Women's Army corps. She became a faculty member at the University of Toronto after the war and set out to widen her clinical skills to teach courses in personality assessment. In 1940, Mary Salter married renown Australian tycoon Leonard Ainsworth and accompanied him to London, where he completed his doctoral studies. While in London, Mary Ainsworth was introduced to a job opportunity that happened to involve research into the effect on personality development of separation from the mother in early childhood, under the direction of John Bowlby. It was at this time that Ainsworth became acquainted with Bowlby's view of the attachment behavior system, opening the door to her crucial contributions to attachment theory (Bretherton, 1992).

In 1970, Ainsworth devised an assessment technique called the Strange Situation Classification (SSC) to investigate how attachments might vary between children. Her goal was to determine differences in attachment behaviors, specifically between infants and mothers. Ainsworth's laboratory procedure was originally designed to examine the balance of attachment

and exploratory behaviors under conditions of low and high stress among 1-year-olds (McLeod, 2009).

The experiment was set up in a small room with one-way glass in order to observe the behavior of infants covertly. The sample comprised of infants aged between 12 and 18 months from 100 middle-class American families. The procedure was conducted in a series of eight episodes lasting approximately 3 minutes each:

1. The mother, baby, and the experimenter are introduced to a room (this step lasts less than one minute).
2. The mother and baby are left alone in the room with toys
3. A stranger comes into the room and joins the mother and the infant
4. The mother leaves the room and the infant is left alone with the stranger
5. The mother returns and the stranger leaves the room
6. The mother leaves the room and the infant is left completely alone
7. The stranger returns to the room
8. The mother returns and the stranger leaves the room

In terms of scoring, the Strange Situation classifications (i.e., attachment patterns) are primarily based on how the infant reacts or interacts with the mother upon reunion (episodes 5 and 8). These behaviors are measured in four ways:

- Proximity and contact seeking
- Contact maintaining
- Avoidance of proximity and contact
- Resistance to contact and comforting

The observer notes the behavior displayed by the infant during 15-second intervals and scores the intensity of the behavior on a scale of 1 to 7. Other behaviors that were observed include:

- Exploratory Behaviors (moving around the room, looking around, playing with toys)
- Search Behaviors (following mother to the door, banging on the door, orienting to or looking at the door, looking at or going to the mother's empty chair)
- Affect Displays (crying or smiling)

From this experiment, Ainsworth identified three broad categories of attachment: Secure (type B), Insecure Avoidant (type A), and Insecure Resistant, also known as "anxious" or "ambivalent" (type C). She concluded that these attachment patterns were the result of early infanthood interactions with the mother.

Ainsworth discovered that the majority of children in her sample were securely attached (approximately 70 percent). Secure children use the mother as a safe base to explore their environment—they were able to explore the room and play with the toys, though frequently looking back at the mother for encouragement or reassurance. The child was cautious of the stranger when left alone with the stranger, but friendly when the mother was present. Most importantly, the child was distressed when the mother left the room, but reacted with positivity and happiness upon reunion—the distressed child was able to be easily comforted by the mother upon her return. Once comforted, the child was quickly able to resume independent exploration. This pattern of attachment suggests that the attachment figure was responsive to the infant's needs in early childhood. The child feels confident that he can depend on the figure and knows that the figure will be available to meet his needs. He seeks the attachment figure in times of distress, and can be easily soothed by the figure when distressed (Ainsworth, 1978).

In her sample, approximately 15 percent of children showed signs of Insecure Avoidant attachment. The child paid little or no attention to the mother when she was in the room and played normally in the presence of the stranger. It appeared that the stranger and the mother were able to comfort the child equally well, and the avoidant child showed no preference for the mother over a complete stranger. When the mother left the room, the child showed no sign of distress. When the mother returned, the child showed little interest, and tended to avoid or ignore her. This behavior pattern suggests that such children likely have a caregiver who is insensitive, neglectful, and rejecting of their needs. The attachment figure may withdraw from helping the child during difficult tasks and is often unavailable during times of emotional distress. Thus, Insecure Avoidant children often find the attachment figure emotionally unavailable and unreliable. They are both physically and emotionally independent of the attachment figure and do not orientate to the attachment figure when exploring their environment, nor do they seek contact with the figure in times of distress (Ainsworth, 1978).

Children in the third type of attachment category, Insecure Resistant (also known as Anxious-Resistant or Ambivalent), comprised the other 15 percent of the sample. Insecure Ambivalent/Resistant children cried more and explored less than the other two types, appearing to have a hard time moving away from the mother to explore their surroundings or play with toys. The infant was extremely wary of the stranger in the room, even in the presence of the mother. Anxious-Resistant children adopted ambivalent behavior towards the attachment figure—they sometimes displayed clingy or dependent behavior but also rejected the figure when they engaged in interaction. When the mother left the room, the infant showed intense distress and separation anxiety. Upon reunion, the distressed child could not be easily soothed or comforted by the mother. The distressed child approached the mother but resisted contact,

sometimes even pushing her away. This behavior seemed to indicate that the child wanted to re-establish close proximity to his attachment figure, yet he also felt resentment—even anger—toward the mother for leaving him in the first place. As a result, the child may have felt abandoned or rejected by the mother in this situation and therefore rejected the mother's attempts at contact. Ainsworth believed that this behavior results from an inconsistent level of response to the child's needs from the primary caregiver. Such behavior suggests that the child has failed to develop feelings of security from their attachment figure because though the figure may offer comfort, it is on the figure's own terms rather than in a way that answers the child's needs. The attachment figure of an Insecure Resistant child may be more emotionally demonstrative than the attachment figures of Secure or Insecure Avoidant children, but are not particularly sensitive or tuned into their child's needs (Ainsworth, 1978). As a result, the child may find their attachment figure confusing, inconsistent, or at times unreliable.

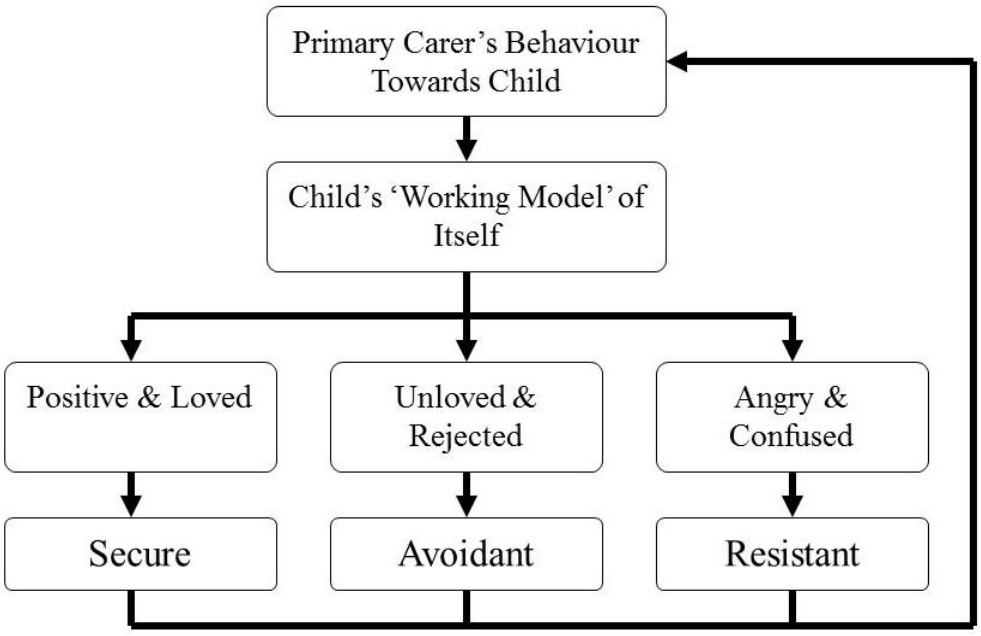

Figure VI. Internal Working Model According to Attachment Style (McLeod, 2009)

Ainsworth suggested the "caregiver sensitivity hypothesis" as an explanation for the different attachment types. Her maternal sensitivity hypothesis argues that a child's attachment style is dependent on the behavior that the mother shows towards the child: "sensitive" mothers are responsive to the child's needs and are more likely to have securely attached children, whereas mothers who are less sensitive towards their child (such as mothers who respond to the child's needs incorrectly or mothers who are impatient with or neglectful of the child's needs) are likely to have insecurely attached children. For example, securely attached children develop a positive working model of themselves—they have mental representations of others as helpful and view themselves as worthy of respect (Jacobsen & Hoffman, 1997). Avoidant children view themselves as unworthy and unacceptable due to the rejecting and unresponsive primary caregiver (Larose & Bernier, 2001). Ambivalent children have a negative self-image and tend to exaggerate their emotional responses as a way to gain attention (Kobak, 1993). Thus, insecure attachment styles are associated with an increased risk of social and emotional behavior problems in accordance with the child's internal working model (see Figure VI). Ainsworth's experimental findings provided the first empirical evidence for Bowlby's attachment theory (McLeod, 2009).

Ainsworth's Strange Situation Classification has generally been found to have good reliability, meaning that it achieves consistent results, and it is still considered to be the most widely used method for assessing infant attachment to a caregiver (Melhuish, 1993). The findings, however, have not gone without criticism. One criticism is that the study only identifies the type of attachment specifically between a child and the mother, as opposed to a child's attachment to a father or grandmother (Lamb, 1977). Another crucial disadvantage of

Ainsworth's experiment is that the study's sample is biased—the children all came from middle-class American families. Therefore, these findings cannot be generalized to cultures outside of American society and working-class families (McLeod, 2009). Although Ainsworth's attachment patterns as we know them today were based on a Western, mother-child sample, there has been interest in observing father-child attachment relationships as well as attachment relationships with cross-cultural sample sizes.

Childrearing and Attachment Across Cultures

Cultural anthropology can contribute to broadening our understanding of attachment relationships. Detailed configurations of types of infant care, child-adult relationships and later regularities in personality can be cited on a comparative basis, and such comparative studies can be used to widen the terms of reference as well as reduce provincialism. In addition, they can be used as natural control situations and as hypotheses-generating situations (World Health Organization, 1962).

Studies in childrearing practices reveal that different cultures emphasize different aspects of childrearing. In collectivist cultures, for example, childrearing methods emphasize conformity, obedience, security, and reliability. Rather than individual uniqueness and self enhancement, childrearing in collectivist cultures foster harmony and proper demeanor for the purpose of fitting into the social surround. Family hierarchy, for example, is promoted by instilling values of fulfilling obligations and responsibilities. Therefore, conversations do not center around the child's wishes and intentions, but on clear instructions, moral obligations, and social roles and responsibilities (Triandis, 2001). As attachment theory emphasizes, a child's attachment style is dependent on the behavior that the caregiver shows towards the child. Thus, childrearing methods across cultures may also largely impact attachment.

Although there is evidence that the evolutionary value of certain parenting behaviors appear to be universal, developmental psychologists have also found that cultural variations in parental attitudes, values, and practices emerge in the early socialization process, particularly within mother-child interactions. Whereas American mothers rate verbal assertiveness and social skills very high among the goals of child-rearing, Japanese mothers tend to focus more on emotional maturity, compliance to adult authority, and courtesy in social exchange. For example, the Americans tended to focus more on talking with their children about the content of problems, whereas the Japanese tended to pay attention to the situation and the social relations surrounding a problem (Rohlen, 1998). Caudill and Winstein (1969) found that Japanese mothers spent more time soothing and quieting their infants compared to American mothers, who interacted with their babies in ways that encouraged bubbly vocalization. Where self-restraint matters, the mothers' interaction style matched important child qualities in each cultural context. Japanese reticence, self-restraint, mutual dependence, and passive communication style contrasted with American assertiveness, explicit emotional display, quest for uniqueness, and goal-oriented communication (Azuma, 1994). This reflects the Japanese beliefs about the self as discussed in Chapter 3, in which different aspects of the self are reserved for specific interactions. Thus, the child is taught the qualities that align with these ideals of self in a cultural context.

In 1988, Psychologists Van Ijzendoorn and Kroonenberg sought to observe how Ainsworth's three attachment styles applied across different cultures. Using meta-analysis, they analyzed data from 32 studies in 8 different countries and calculated the average percentage of children in each attachment style for each country (see Figure VII).

Country	Number of studies	Percentage of each attachment type		
		Secure	Insecure-avoidant	Insecure-resistant
Great Britain	1	75	22	3
Germany	3	57	35	8
Netherlands	4	67	26	7
Sweden	1	74	22	4
Japan	2	68	5	27
Israel	2	64	7	29
United States	18	65	21	14
China	1	50	25	25
Mean		**65**	**21**	**14**

Figure VII. Meta-analysis comparing attachment styles among different cultures (Van Ijzendoorn & Kroonenberg, 1988)

Results showed that secure attachment was the most common type in all cultures, with the lowest percentage of secure attachments found in China, and the highest in Great Britain. Individualistic countries tended to have more avoidant children, whereas collectivist countries had high levels of resistant children. Interestingly, Japan had an extremely high number of resistant children and almost no avoidant children (Ijzendoorn & Kroonenberg, 1988). Although the overall consistency in secure attachment types among cultures indicate that there may be universal and innate characteristics underpinning infant and caregiver interactions, the significant variations in insecure attachment styles among cultures imply that universality is limited. Furthermore, this study indicates and that there exists a strong link between cultural factors in childrearing practices and attachment security, since childrearing practices vary considerably among cultures in terms of environment, traditions, and beliefs about children.

In 1990, Takahashi conducted an experiment in Japan based on the Strange Situation Classification. Results indicated that secure Japanese infants, cared for mainly by their mothers, showed more extreme reactions to strangers and increased responsiveness to their mothers when strangers were present compared to secure Euro-Western infants. Moreover, most secure Japanese infants contacted their mothers within 15 seconds—a shorter time period than usually observed in the procedure (Takahashi, 1990). This may be explained by Japan's socio-cultural norms surrounding caregiving. Infants in multiple-caregiving communities, such as Australian Aboriginal infants, access comfort and feeding from several women and the concept of "mother" applies to several caregivers rather than one person (Yeo, 2003). Japanese infants, on the other hand, are cared for primarily and extensively by their mothers, which might result in greater separation anxiety and fear of strangers among Japanese infants. In contrast to American childrearing practices, Japanese mothers do not leave their infants with others—including fathers and grandparents. Mothers engage in co-sleeping, co-bathing, and frequent carrying of the infant, whereas Western mothers make it a developmental and societal goal for infants to learn to cope with the stress of being alone and separated from the attachment figure (Takahashi, 1990 and Behrens, 2004). Lack of exploration has been observed among Japanese infants, suggesting that exploration behavior is also culturally influenced (Takahashi, 1990).

A 1985 study by Miyake, Chen, and Campos reported 75 percent secure children, 21 percent ambivalent children, and 0 percent avoidant children. Takahashi's study also observed no Japanese infants with avoidant attachment. This may be explained by Japan's cultural focus on harmony on interpersonal interactions—avoidance in Japanese society is viewed as impolite and early avoidant behaviors are counteracted by maternal contact-maintaining behaviors. Since harmony is a goal of early development, children are carefully socialized not to display avoidant

behaviors toward others lest they break connections (Takahashi, 1990). Researchers have also highlighted the high rates of Insecure Ambivalent attachment among Japanese infants. Takahashi's study in 1990 indicated that whereas no infant had avoidant attachment, an unusually large percentage—30 percent—of the infants had ambivalent attachment.

Amae

Arguably the most prominent concept indigenous to Japan, Takeo Doi's concept of *amae* is a key to understanding the Japanese mentality at individual and group levels. *Amae* can perhaps be best defined as the feeling of dependence, or perhaps the desire to be loved and cared for. It is a culture-specific interpersonal emotion that is supposedly experienced only by Japanese people, presumably induced by culture-specific circumstances or instilled values. The conceptualization of *amae* has been refined over the decades—Japanese and non-Japanese scholars have realized that the concept is not a simple or unitary phenomenon, and it cannot be fully explained by related concepts such as dependence and attachment. The multifaceted nature of *amae* is not simply limited to mother and child interactions, but is also observable throughout the lifespan. Some of its facets are similar to Bowlby's Western theory of interpersonal attachment—both *amae* and attachment facilitate formation and maintenance of affectional bonds that begin from infancy and last for a lifetime (Takamatsu & Takai, 2019).

Although *amae* involves close contact with mothers who are sensitive and responsive to the infant's needs, this responsiveness differs from the Euro-Western view of mothers' response to their infant's signals. Japanese mothers tend to anticipate their infant's needs and try to meet them before the infant signals distress. In Japanese culture, *amae* causes the mother to keep up a sense of dependency in the child, and keep a supportive relationship out of fear that the child will

turn against her and become further isolated. In turn, the child, out of *amae,* may not voice dissatisfaction to the mother because he does not want to lose the mother's good will and will make himself emotionally numb in order to maintain good relations with her (Zielenziger). The elusive concept of *amae* may be culturally imperative to understanding Insecure Ambivalent attachment in Japan, as explained by psychotherapist Suzanne Hall Vogel in the following section.

The Role of Mothers and Ambivalent Attachment in Japan

Social worker and psychotherapist Suzanne Hall Vogel of Harvard University Health Services lived in Tokyo from 1958-1960 for the purpose of studying Japanese family life. As an American wife and mother, Vogel experienced a number of culture shocks as she got to know Japanese women and the Japanese family system. From Japanese wives and mothers, Vogel came to comprehend the primacy in Japan of the mother-child bond over the marital relationship—one wife she spoke with felt that the mother-child bond was by nature the strongest one, and what she strived for (and largely achieved) was control over her children's upbringing and over the household. According to Vogel, the wife served her husband as if he was a guest in the house, and she came to epitomize for Vogel a basic equation: woman equals mother (Shwalb & Shwalb, 1996).

As discussed in the previous chapter, ideal hegemonic masculinity in Japan has been constructed and maintained through salarymen's roles as breadwinners for their families, requiring Japanese men's strong commitment to work. This commitment to work, however, has resulted in Japanese men's limited involvement with their families, including caring for their children. Comparative studies indicate that Japanese fathers spend much less time with their children than do fathers in other countries (Ishii-Kuntz, 2003). According to a 1994 survey,

Japanese fathers spent an average of 3.8 hours per day with their children aged three or younger—significantly less than in the United States (5.35 hours), the United Kingdom (6.45 hours), Korea (4.12 hours), and Thailand (7.17 hours). Moreover, the most frequent father-child interaction in Japan was engaging in play rather than routine physical care of children as reported for fathers in other countries (Japan Association for Women's Education, 1994). Due to this shallow involvement of fathers at home, Japanese families have been frequently characterized as "fatherless." Revisiting this construction of masculinity expounded upon in the last chapter, some Japanese fathers further seem to consider their absence from home an important factor contributing to their masculinities, thus enabling them to maintain an authoritarian image at home. This idea of a masculine image also coincides with children's preferences for their fathers to be strongly work-oriented. Hence, Japanese fathers' masculine identities are not only maintained by their own commitment to work and the subsequent distancing from their families, but also by the masculine images and concepts held by their wives and children (Ishii-Kuntz, 2003). This idea and social expectation further perpetuates the notion that women should be and are the primary caregivers and attachment figures of Japanese children. In turn, this could lead to an even closer mother-child bond in Japanese culture compared to other cultures. Thus, this unique Japanese mother-child relationship may have a greater psychological effect on the child than in another cultural context, setting the stage for a potential hikikomori condition.

Vogel observed that the mother's methods of punishment on the child and its effects largely point to an insecure resistant attachment relationship between Japanese children and their mothers. One night, Vogel heard the sound of a child's crying and pounding on the entrance gate next door. Her Japanese maid explained that the child had likely been shut out of the house for punishment and was crying. Vogel's mind jumped to the contrast of how the situation would

play out in America—any American child, she thought, would probably run down the street gleefully; the more usual method of American punishment would be to send the child to his or her room or "ground" the child rather than locking the child out of the house. At other times, Vogel would notice that mothers walking down the street with misbehaving toddlers did not hold their hands tightly and command them to stay close, as American mothers would do. Instead, the mother would leave the unruly child behind and walk a bit ahead of the straying child, who would then become anxious, run after the mother, and thereafter stay close to her. Vogel mused that the American assumption was that children want to be free and independent, and hence parents punish them with confinement or enforced dependence. In comparison, the Japanese punish children by evoking the fear of abandonment (Shwalb & Shwalb, 1996). Thus, the methods of punishment and the desired effects were different between the cultures, and showed resemblance to different types of attachment.

Vogel's understanding of *amae* helped her realize the role of the close mother-child relationship in the training and discipline of Japanese children. Initially, she wondered why the human experience of *amae* had no English equivalent, but realized that the closest word, *dependent,* was viewed negatively. According to Vogel, Americans are uncomfortable with their dependent feelings and often try to deny their existence. Vogel had been puzzled by the sparsity of commands from Japanese mothers and impressed by the relative lack of rebellion from the children. She observed continual physical contact and the mother's anticipation of her child's every need, and hypothesized that it was this uniquely cultural dependence and emotional bond that largely shaped the child's behavior and attachment style (Shwalb & Shwalb, 1996).

At the same time, Japanese mothers often exert enormous pressure on their child. Some studies indicate that high levels of maternal control or interference are associated with

ambivalent attachment—parental behaviors associated with ambivalent attachment in children often include asserting overprotectiveness and control, as well as threats of abandonment or harm (Genuis, 1994). Saito, who has treated over 1,000 hikikomori patients, views the problem as a family disease as well as a social disease, largely caused by the interdependence between Japanese parents and children. Moreover, there is a pressure that mothers place on their boys—particularly eldest sons—to excel in academics and in the corporate world. Hikikomori often describe years of rigorous classroom learning followed by afternoons and evenings of intense cram school to prepare them for entrance exams. Mariko Fujiwara, director of research at the Hakuhodo Institute of Life and Living in Tokyo, believes that Japan's declining birth rate is also heightening parents' demands, since they have fewer children on whom to push their hopes. As one hikikomori expert puts it, "Japanese parents tell their children to fly while holding firmly to their ankles" (Jones, 2006). Thus, these parenting methods as well as the pressures placed on children are reflected in ambivalently attached Japanese children and largely contribute to the hikikomori phenomenon.

Violent outbursts of many hikikomori against their parents are also reflective of ambivalent attachment. As seen with Insecure Ambivalent infants in the Strange Situation, it is a form of resistance and rejection stemming from resentment and helplessness. This ambivalence toward parents is reinforced by the hikikomori's desire to reject the parents (primarily the mother, since the father is rarely home), yet the need to still depend on the mother, who must take care of her withdrawn son—such as by cooking him food and leaving it outside his room—remotely from the other side of his door.

Attachment theory also stresses the idea that the attachment relationship in infanthood carries into later development and relationships in adulthood. It is perhaps no surprise, then, that

insecurely attached children might struggle in peer relationships more than those who are securely attached. Higher levels of attachment security predict higher levels of sociability, positive social behavior, popularity, and friendships in childhood and adolescence (Allen & Land, 1999). In contrast, insecure attachment in infancy predicts negative peer relationships and increased social anxiety in adolescence. Children who are Insecure Ambivalent are often not prepared to organize relationships that are outside of the mother-child relationships since they are so focused on gaining proximity to the primary caregiver, and often show less adaptive exploratory behaviors in peer-related situations (Cassidy & Berlin, 1994). Thus, Japan's cultural influence on societal expectations affect attachment, and vice versa—these children who are insecurely attached become victims of the peer rejection and bullying discussed in the previous chapter, and this rejection in turn reinforces the child's insecure attachment. Combined, these factors may lead to the hikikomori phenomenon, in which Japanese culture undoubtedly plays a fundamental role.

Chapter 5: From the Perspective of the Hikikomori

In the previous chapters, I have examined the crucial and necessary factors that comprise the hikikomori phenomenon. In this chapter, I will examine how these factors apply to the daily lives of hikikomori and those affected by family members who are hikikomori. Japan's societal expectations to be a functioning member of society reinforce the stigma around social recluses, bringing complicated challenges to addressing the issue of hikikomori. There has been speculation that hikikomori is a response to these expectations brought on by Japanese culture and parenting. Efforts to reverse the effects of the condition will be discussed, as well as the challenges of hikikomori treatment and prevention.

Reinforcing the Stigma

In the realm of shame, a strong fear by families with hikikomori is that those in the local neighborhood will notice the hikikomori's reclusive behavior around the house. Consequently, many parents encourage hikikomori to stay hidden to spare the family from neighborhood gossip. In many ways, the rest of the family members are also effectively shutting themselves in from the outside world to mask the perceived shame for the hikikomori in their midst (Tolbert, 2002). The social stigma attributed to hikikomori by relatives and by the community to hide the afflicted from sight is not a new social phenomenon in Japan. In fact, hikikomori treatment echoes long-standing negative societal attitudes by the Japanese about members of society with mental, physical, or emotional disabilities. A survey by the Japanese Ministry of Health and Welfare indicates 2.8 million disabled people in Japan. The societal attitude deems that such people are best dealt with in private (Cook, 1998).

Moreover, parents and family members are also conscious of their social standing and are reluctant to seek professional help. As much as they want to support their loved ones, they themselves are susceptible to the rigid socio-cultural pressures of Japanese society. Parents of hikikomori face deep shame due to the Japanese stigma of standing out or failing to fit in. Seeking help would mean publicizing their actions to friends and neighbors, which Japanese families try to avoid. Instead, parents will often pretend the problem does not exist (Zielenziger, 2007). Yet although about half of hikikomori are violent toward their parents, most families would find it unthinkable to throw their children out—such an act is not in their culture (Hammond & Kremer, 2013).

One hikikomori's father admitted that he did nothing to help his son, saying, "We told him to handle it himself. We thought he was stronger than he was" (Jones, 2006). The view of hikikomori as "weak" only reinforces the stigma around hikikomori as well as those with disabilities and mental illness, making the Japanese socio-cultural mindset hard to change. However, there has been modern call for action to end the stigma around disability. Through the efforts of Nobel Prize winning author Kenzaburo Oe—who wrote about the social stigma surrounding the handicapped—as well as the work of other advocates for the disabled, old Japanese attitudes and barriers about handicapped and disabled people have begun to wear down, and will hopefully continue to do so (Cook, 1998).

Hikikomori as a Form of Rebellion

Though hikikomori may be caused by a number of factors, there has been speculation that the hikikomori epidemic may be a *response* to the confinement of traditional Japanese culture and societal expectation. In many ways, hikikomori stand in opposition to the ideal salaryman masculinity, substituting a social life at the workplace for one that is anti-social,

reclusive, and devoid of responsibility (Rahardjo, 2013). Could hikikomori be a rejection of traditional Japanese ideas of masculinity as well as the societal expectations and pressures put on them by their parents and peers? Cultural anthropologist James Roberson believes that "hikikomori is a resistance to that pressure. Some of them are saying: 'To hell with it. I don't like it and I don't do well'" (Jones, 2006). Former hikikomori Iwata Mitsunori states, "I was sick of everything. My own way of seeing things and society's way of seeing things did not fit, so I had no option but to withdraw" (Secher, 2002). Another former hikikomori recalls, "I felt angry at myself, angry at society, I felt completely hopeless, like there was nothing I could do" (Martyn-Hemphill, 2019).

In other cultures, the response from many youth might be different—they might "join a gang or become a Goth or be a part of some other subculture" (Jones, 2006). In Japan, where uniformity and harmony are still prized and outward appearances are paramount, rebellion comes in more muted forms, one of which could be the hikikomori phenomenon. Suzanne Vogel believes that an "acting in" in the frame of the hikikomori phenomenon. She describes this behavior as a generation of Japanese youth who are turning their unhappiness inward—those who choose to socially withdraw are rebelling against their authority figure—the group—in the only way they can grasp: by withdrawing from participation as a form of protest, emotional distress, or social fatigue (White, 2003). "Traditionally, Japanese psychology was thought to be group-oriented. Japanese people do not want to stand out in a group," says Yuriko Suzuki. "But I think especially for the younger generation, they want more individualized or personalized care and attention. I think we are in a mixed state." Thus, perhaps hikikomori is not only a form of silent opposition as a reactive measure, but also a desire to seek a type of unrestrained identity formation.

Recovery and Solutions

As the hikikomori epidemic becomes increasingly problematic, Japanese society can no longer ignore the issue. Industries to counteract the phenomenon have sprung up in efforts to help hikikomori sufferers reintegrate into Japanese society. There are support groups for parents, psychologists specializing in hikikomori, and programs that offer dormitories and job training for recovering hikikomori (Jones, 2006). One such effort is the program New Start, a company that introduced the concept of a "Rental Sister." Rental sisters are outreach counselors whose job is to befriend hikikomori and coax them out of their rooms by reintroducing them to the outside world and to human interaction. The relationship usually begins when a parent calls New Start and schedules a consultation and routine visits with a rental sister, who usually starts by writing a letter to the hikikomori introducing herself and the program (Jones, 2006). Families of hikikomori sometimes pay 100,000 yen a month (approximately $900) for a weekly visit (Martynn-Hemphill, 2019). Although there are a few rental brothers, one counselor says that since "women are softer," hikikomori respond better to them (Jones, 2006). This may be a result of hikikomori being more comfortable with women than men due to the cultural effects of mother-child attachment in childhood as well as the masculine perceptions of men as breadwinners rather than figures that show affection.

Ayako has been a rental sister for over a decade. She and another rental sister, Atsuko, are part of a specialized group of women who get paid to take on this task. Ayako has worked with Kenta, the hikikomori from Chapter 3 who was bullied for his high-pitched voice. Mr. Haruto—the father of the hikikomori from Chapter 3 who once broke his wife's ribs in an episode of violent outburst—"rented" the sister Atsuko to work with his son. Getting his son to cooperate was difficult, and it took immense effort to work up to a point of contact. Even so, the

only contact that the hikikomori allowed with Atsuko was short conversations through his bedroom door and written letters that Atsuko had to pass him under the door (Martynn-Hemphill, 2019). One hikikomori, 28-year-old Y.S., was sent an introduction letter by the rental sister Kawakami. “I never read it; I threw it away,” he recalls. When Kawakami came to his house for the first time, Y.S. opened his door long enough to tell her, “Please, go home.” A counselor at New Start says that this is a typical first meeting. Rental sisters continue to talk to the hikikomori through the door, rarely getting a response. Months can go by before a hikikomori opens his door and more months before he ventures out to the park or movies with a rental sister. The goal is that eventually, the hikikomori will enroll in the New Start dormitory program and participate in job-training programs at day-care centers, coffee shops, or restaurants (Jones, 2006).

The New Start Dormitory is a place for recovering hikikomori to be involved in part-time work and volunteering. They must give up their phones and are only allowed to watch television in a communal setting. No computer games are allowed. From 2017-2019, the dormitory has housed about 2,000 hikikomori who live have lived there for over a year, of which 80 percent have now re-established themselves independently. A hikikomori named Ikuo was in his mid-30s when he joined the program, which turned his life around. “I came to New Start Dormitory because I didn’t want to be with my parents,” he said. During his time at the dormitory, Ikuo had to do some volunteering, where he met his future wife—Ayako the rental sister, who convinced him to do part-time work as a rental brother (Martynn-Hemphill, 2019).

In contrast to companies such as New Start, social stigma and lack of understanding from parents may lead to detrimental methods of dealing with hikikomori. A common reaction among parents is anger, and many parents try to lecture their hikikomori child or make him feel guilty for bringing shame on the family. The result is that communication with parents may break down

altogether. Some parents have been driven to extreme measures—one company used to provide services in which parents would hire people to burst into the hikikomori's room and forcibly drag them away to a dormitory to learn the "error of their ways." Director of the psychiatry department at Kohnodai Hospital Kazuhiko Saito believed that these sudden and forcible interventions can prove disastrous, saying that in many cases, the patient becomes violent towards the staff or parents (Hammond & Kremer, 2013).

Saito instead advises that healthcare professionals visit hikikomori only after they are fully briefed on the patient, who must know that they are coming in advance. He believes that a do-nothing approach will not work—he compares the hikikomori state to alcoholism, for which it is impossible to recover from without a form of support network. Saito's approach is to begin with "reorganizing" the relationship between the hikikomori and his parents into one that involves healthy communication. When the hikikomori is well enough to come to the clinic in person, he can be treated with therapy. Although group therapy is a relatively new concept to Japanese psychology, self-help groups have become essential to drawing hikikomori back into society (Hammond & Kremer, 2013).

Some parents, however, genuinely fear that their hikikomori child will not be able to survive without them. "Maybe we should have kicked him out," mused one mother, "but we couldn't in the beginning. And now it's too late. I don't know how he'd take care of himself. He doesn't have the skills. We'd just end up supporting him." Meanwhile, her daughter is looking to marry, and she is worried that her hikikomori son may hurt her chances. "People check a family's background," she lamented. "Reputation is everything" (Jones, 2006). Another mother confessed, "I think my son is losing the power or desire to do what he wants to do. Maybe he used to have something he wanted to do, but I think I ruined it" (Hammond & Kremer, 2013).

Challenges

The hikikomori epidemic is becoming not only a problem for the hikikomori and their families, but also for a country that is struggling with a plummeting birth rate and what has been called a youth crisis. As a hikikomori ages, the chances of reintegration into society decline, and some experts predict that most hikikomori who are withdrawn for a year or more may never fully recover. In many cases, their parents are approaching retirement, and once they die, the fate of the hikikomori is a problem that has yet to be resolved (Jones, 2006).

A large challenge that those afflicted with hikikomori face is the issue of reintegration—even if they want to, many hikikomori are reluctant to re-enter society because they have no clear idea of what role they can assume once they do so. As one hikikomori states, "Allowing a blank to appear on your resume is like social suicide. Once you leave your position in this sick society, there is no way back" (Secher, 2002). Keigo Okonogi, a professor of Psychiatric Medicine at Tokyo International University, agrees with this sentiment:

> In today's society, with its stress on everyone following the same course and pursuing the same goals, there are so few chances to recover your footing once you've stumbled – if you've been bullied, for example, or if you've failed an entrance exam (Reuters, 2001).

"We used to believe everyone was equal," said Noki Futagami, the founder of New Start. "But the gap is growing. I suspect there will be a bipolarization of this society. There will be the group of people who can be in the global world. And then there will be others, like the hikikomori—the ones who cannot be in that world" (Jones, 2006). When Y.S., the uncooperative hikikomori that the rental sister Kawakami worked with, still refused to speak to her by the fifth visit, Kawakami asked him to write a letter about himself. In his letter, he told her his birthday

and his love for making plastic model cars. He revealed, "I don't think the situation is good, but I don't know how to solve it. This might be a chance to change it. But I don't know if I can do it." When Kawakami asked him to create a plastic model car for some day-care children, Y.S. produced a meticulously detailed and painted car. Kawakami recalls that he appeared so pleased, "as if he'd never been asked to do something for someone else before. He was sitting in his room all day where nothing was expected of him, and he did nothing to show his value" (Jones, 2006). Thus, it becomes a psychological cycle of feeling useless because hikikomori do not know that they can be useful, and society does not treat them as such.

As argued in this thesis, the hikikomori epidemic is undoubtedly a culture bound syndrome. The challenges that come with this, however, are tricky to maneuver. The condition is largely due to the cultural influences on Japan's society—which in turn heavily influence Japanese societal expectations and child attachment that are necessary components comprising hikikomori. Yet we cannot merely deem a society's culture as "wrong." Thus, we face the challenge of trying to shift the mindset and perceptions of an entire society that is run by centuries of deep-rooted cultural beliefs and social norms. The stigma around hikikomori due to these culturally rooted biases has prevented Japanese society from clearly examining the epidemic as a socio-cultural issue. Rather, Japanese society views hikikomori as the result of laziness, abnormality, or disease. Even the Japanese government, fearful of how widespread the phenomenon has gotten, has begun to insist that hikikomori is a social phenomenon rather than a disease (Watts, 2002). Sadatsugu Kudo writes:

> I used to object to the words 'cure' and 'recover' that were frequently used by people who are called 'professionals.' It is total nonsense to 'cure' kids who are completely healthy and sane. Those kids are normal; adults just need to prepare and provide the right environment (Barr, 2000).

Former hikikomori Iwata Mitsunori states, “I knew that I was not mentally unwell, and that medical treatment was not what I needed.” Thus, Iwata’s cure came “not from drugs but from contact with people who believed in him” (Secher, 2002). “Most hikikomori are not mental patients,” Kudo insists. “They are normal human beings. They just need to have normal human experiences” (Barr, 2000).

Conclusion

In this paper, we have explored the influence that Japanese culture has on both Japanese societal expectation as well as attachment patterns. The combination of Japanese culture, societal expectation, and ambivalent attachment is necessary to produce the hikikomori phenomenon, with Japanese culture as the root influence in all factors. All three factors are dependent of each other and essential to the development of the phenomenon.

We have examined the ways in which historical context helped shape Japanese culture, and the ways in which Japanese cultural values affected how Japanese people responded to historical events. These cultural values rigidly shape Japanese societal expectations, and deviation from social norms results in social ostracism. Due to Japan's hyper-masculine culture, much of this societal pressure is placed on young men, who often feel hopeless, stuck, and rejected when they fail to meet society's expectations or fit into their social surround. This rejection by society, often in the form of bullying in young adults, has a devastating effect on children in a culture in which social harmony and communal approval are at the core of all social relationships. At the same time, Japanese socio-cultural values also affect childrearing methods and values, and these methods and values appear to commonly produce ambivalently attached children. In turn, insecurely attached children are more likely to develop negative peer relationships, creating a cycle of negative feedback.

Because of the long-maintained and unique history shaping Japanese culture, hikikomori is undoubtedly a culture-bound syndrome unique to Japan, plaguing modern Japanese society and raising economic uncertainty. The alarming rates of young adults dropping out of society could lead to long-term problems such as labor shortages and an increase in people who are

dependent on welfare, which could be an issue especially in a country with one of the lowest birthrates in the world. In a society that relies so heavily on social interdependence, the hikikomori epidemic is widely concerning—it has a negative and disruptive impact not only on family structure and relations, but also on Japanese society as a whole.

Despite the social stigma still surrounding the condition and the challenges that come with shifting the way an entire culture views societal norms, efforts are being made to counteract the causes. Recovery and prevention may be a gradual process and may be met with resistance by those who are reluctant to reevaluate traditional values, but it is important to recognize the condition as a result of Japanese socio-cultural factors so that Japan can work towards fostering an environment in which hikikomori feel comfortable reintegrating into Japanese society.

References

Ainsworth, M. D. S. (1968), Object relations, dependency, and attachment: A theoretical review of the infant mother relationship. Child Development.

Ainsworth, M. D. S., & Bell, S. M. (1970). Attachment, exploration, and separation: Illustrated by the behavior of one-year-olds in a strange situation. *Child Development.*

Ainsworth, M. D. S., Blehar, M. C., Waters, E., & Wall, S. (1978). Patterns of attachment: A psychological study of the strange situation. Hillsdale, N.J.: Erlbaum.

Allen, J. P. & Land, D. (1999). Attachment in adolescence. In J. Cassidy & P. R. Shaver (Eds), Handbook of attachment: Theory, research, and clinical applications (pp. 319–335). New York: Guilford Press

Asher, Steven R. and Coie, John D. (1990) *Peer Rejection in Childhood.* Cambridge University Press.

Azuma, H,., Imada, H. (1994). Origins and development of psychology in Japan: The interaction between western science and the Japanese cultural heritage. *International Journal of Psychology.*

Barr, C. W. (2000). "Call For Help: Young Japanese retreat to life of seclusion." The Christian Science Monitor

Behrens, K. Y. (2004). A multifaceted view of the concept of amae: Reconsidering the indigenous Japanese concept of relatedness. Human Development

Bretherton, I. (1992) *The Origins of Attachment Theory: John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth.* Retrieved from http://www.psychology.sunysb.edu/attachment/online/inge_origins.pdf

Bretherton, I., & Munholland, K.A. (1999). Internal working models revisited. In J. Cassidy & P.R. Shaver (Eds.), *Handbook of attachment: Theory, research, and clinical applications (pp. 89– 111)*. New York: Guilford Press.

Bowlby, J. (1952) *Maternal care and mental health,* Geneva (*World Health Organization: Monograph Series,* No.2)

Bowlby, J. (1958). The nature of the childs tie to his mother. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*

Bowlby, J. (1969), Attachment and loss, Vol. 1: Attachment. New York: Basic Books.

Carteret, M. (2010, November 2). Cultural Differences in Family Dynamics. Retrieved from https://www.dimensionsofculture.com/2010/11/culture-and-family-dynamics/

Cassidy, J. & Berlin, L. (1994). The insecure/ambivalent pattern of attachment: Theory and research. Child Development

Commodore Perry and Japan (1853-1854). (2009). Retrieved from http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/japan_1750_perry.htm

Cook, M. (1998, Feb.) "A Private Matter? Sapporo's physically and mentally disabled citizens" www.xene.net

Dasgupta, Romit. 2013. Re-reading the salaryman in Japan crafting masculinities. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge

Deprivation of Maternal Care: A Reassessment of its Effects. (1962). Public Health Papers, No. 14, World Health Organization.

Dziesinki, Michael J. (2003) *Hikikomori: Investigations into the phenomenon of acute social withdrawal in contemporary Japan.* Retrieved from https://towakudai.blogs.com/Hikikomori.Research.Survey.pdf

Edgerton, R.B. (1985). *Rules, exceptions, and social order.* Berkeley: University of California Press

Fujimura-Fanselow, K. and Kameda, A. (1995) 'The changing portrait of Japanese men', in K. Fujimura-Fanselow and A. Kameda (eds) *Japanese Women: New Feminist Perspectives on the Past, Present and Future,* New York: Feminist Press.

Fukushima. (2012) *Sakai, Nonaka, Oono, & NPO houjin zennkoku hikikomori* KHJ Oyanokai.

Furlong A. (2008) *The Japanese hikikomori phenomenon: acute social withdrawal among young people.* Sociological Review.

Genda, Yuji. (2005). *A Nagging Sense of Job Insecurity: the New Reality Facing Japanese Youth.* (J.C. Hoff, Trans.). Tokyo: International House of Japan, Inc.

Genuis, M. (1994). Long-term consequences of childhood attachment: Implications for counselling adolescents. International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling,

Hammond, Claudia and Kremer, William. (2013, July 5) *Hikikomori: Why are so many Japanese men refusing to leave their rooms?* BBC World Service. Retrieved from http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-23182523

Head, J. (2004, December 03). Asia-Pacific | Japan sounds alarm on birth rate. Retrieved from http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4065647.stm

Hikikomori, Solitary Youth of Japan. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.hermitary.com/solitude/hikikomori.html

Hofstede, G. (1980). Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work Related Values. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

Hofstede Insights. (2017). Retrieved from https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/japan,the-usa/

Honjo S, Kasahara Y, Ohtaka K. (1992) School refusal in Japan. Acta Paedopsychiatrica: International Journal of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry.

Ishii-Kuntz, M. (2003). Balancing fatherhood and work: Emergence of diverse masculinities in contemporary Japan. In J. E. Roberson & N. Suzuki (Eds.), Men and Masculinities in Contemporary Japan. New York, NY: RoutledgeCurzon.

Jacobsen, T., & Hoffman, V. (1997). Children's attachment representations: Longitudinal relations to school behavior and academic competency in middle childhood and adolescence. *Developmental Psychology*

Japan Association for Women's Education (1994). *International Comparative Research on 'Home Education': Survey on Children and the Family Life,* Tokyo: Japan Association for Women's Education

Jones M. (2006, Jan 15) *Shutting themselves in.* New York: Times Magazine.

Kaneko S. (2006) *Japan's 'socially withdrawn youths' and time constraints in Japanese society: management and conceptualization of time in a support group for hikikomori.* Time & Society.

Kasahara Y. Taikyaku. (1978) *shinkeishou withdrawal neurosis to iu shinkategorii no teishou (Proposal for a new category of withdrawal neurosis). In: Nakai H, Yamanaka Y, editors. Shishunki no seishinbyouri to chiryou (Psychopathology and treatment in the adolescent)* Tokyo: Iwasaki Gakujutsu Shuppan pp. 287–319.

Kawanishi Y. (2004) *Japanese youth: the other half of the crisis.* Asian Affairs.

Keisatsu hakusho [The police white paper]. (1986). Tokyo: Japan Police Agency, National Institute of Police Science.

Keller, H., & Bard, K. A. (Eds.). (2017). The cultural nature of attachment: Contextualizing relationships and development. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Kobak, R. R., Cole, H. E., Ferenz-Gillies, R., Flemming, W. S., & Gamble, W. (1993). Attachment and emotional regulation during mother-teen problem-solving. A control theory analysis. *Child Development.*

Krieg, A. and Dickie, J. R. (2001) *Attachment and 'Hikikomori': A Psychosocial Developmental Model.* SAGE. Retrieved from https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/dc06/59b5e192c2f0d287c386cbb5694eb727c22e.pdf

Lamb, M. E. (1977). The development of mother-infant and father-infant attachments in the second year of life. *Developmental Psychology*,

Larose, S., & Bernier, A. (2001). Social support processes: Mediators of attachment state of mind and adjustment in later late adolescence. *Attachment and Human Development*,

Main, M., & Solomon, J. (1990). Procedures for identifying infants as disorganized/disoriented during the Ainsworth Strange Situation. In M.T. Greenberg, D. Cicchetti & E.M. Cummings (Eds.), *Attachment in the Preschool Years*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

Martyn-Hemphill, A., & Ebrahim, A. (2019, January 18). Rent-a-sister: Coaxing Japan's young men out of their rooms. Retrieved from https://www.bbc.com/news/av/stories-46885707/rent-a-sister-coaxing-japan-s-hikikomori-out-of-their-rooms

Masahiro, Y. (1999) *Parasaito Shinguru no Jidai (The Age of the Parasite Single).* Tokyo: Chikuma Shinsho

McKenna, Yvonne Elizabeth. (2009, June) *Cultural Influences on Attachment Behaviours.* Lethbridge.

McLeod, Saul. (2009) *Attachment Theory.* Simply Psychology. Retrieved from https://www.simplypsychology.org/attachment.html

Melhuish, E. C. (1993). A measure of love? An overview of the assessment of attachment. *ACPP Review & Newsletter*

Ministry of Health Labor and Welfare (November 12, 2007) *10-dai, 20-dai wo chuushin to shita 'hikikomori' wo meguru chiiki seishin hoken katsudou no gaidorain (Community mental health intervention guidelines aimed at socially withdrawn teenagers and young adults)* Retrieved from http://www.mhlw.go.jp/topics/2003/07/tp0728-1.html.

Miyake, K., Chen, S., & Campos, J. (1985). Infant temperament, mother's mode of interaction, and attachment in Japan: An interim report. Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development,

Pelto, P.J (1968). The difference between "tight" and "loose" societies. *Transaction,* April, 37-40.

Rahardjo, William. (2013). "Changing Ideals in the Hegemonic Salaryman: A Study of Post-War Japanese Masculinity in Relation to Hikikomori, Freeters, and Women in the

Workforce". Senior Theses, Trinity College, Hartford, CT . Trinity College Digital Repository, http://digitalrepository.trincoll.edu/theses/311

Reuters. (2001). "Seventeen becomes an age to fear in Japan." Indian Express Newspapers (Bombay)

Rohlen, T. P. (1989). "Order in Japanese Society: Attachment, Authority, and Routine." Journal of Japanese Studies. Society for Japanese Studies.

Rohlen, T. P., & LeTendre, G. K. (1999). Teaching and learning in Japan. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Saito, S. T. (1998) *hikikomori: owaranai shishunki (Social withdrawal: a neverending adolescence)* Tokyo: PHP Shinsho

Secher, B. (2002). "Solitary Souls: Out of sight, not out of mind." Asahi Shinbun News Service

Schaffer, H, R., & Emerson, P. F. (1964). The development of social attachments in infancy. Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development, 29 (Serial No. 94).

Shwalb, D.W. & Shwalb, B.J. (1996). *Japanese Childrearing.* New York: The Guilford Press.

Smith, R. (1961). The Japanese rural community: Norms, sanctions, and ostracism. *American Anthropologist.*

Sofue, T., Suye, H., & Murakami, T. (1958). Anthropological study of Ejiko, Japanese cradle for child: Its distribution and areal varieties. *Anthropological Science,* 66.

Suwa, M., & Suzuki, K. (2013). The phenomenon of "hikikomori" (social withdrawal) and the socio-cultural situation in Japan today. *Journal of Psychopathology*.

Takahashi, K. (1990). Are the key assumptions of the 'strange situation' procedure universal? A view from Japanese research. Human Development.

Takahata T. (2003) *Saitama-ken ni okeru 'hikikomori' no jittai (A survey of withdrawal syndrome in Saitama Prefecture)* Seishin Igaku (Clinical Psychiatry).

Takamatsu, R., & Takai, J. (2019). Asia-Pacific Perspectives on Intercultural Psychology (W. W. Li, D. Hodgetts, & K. H. Foo, Eds.). NY: Routledge.

Takata, T. (1993). Social comparison and formation of self-concept in adolescent: Some findings about Japanese college students. *Japanese Journal of Educational Psychology,* 339-348.

Teo, A. R. (2009, June) *A New Form of Social Withdrawal in Japan: A Review of Hikikomori.* Retrieved from https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4886853/

Teo, A. R. and Albert G. (2010). *Hikikomori, a Japanese Culture-Bound Syndrome of Social Withdrawal? A Proposal for DSM-5*. The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease, Vol. 198. No. 6

Triandis, H. C. (1989). The Self and Social Behavior in Differing Cultural Context. *Psychological Review, 96*(3).

Triandis, H. C. (2001). *Individualism-Collectivism and Personality.* Blackwell Publishers. Retrieved from http://130.18.86.27/faculty/warkentin/SecurityPapers/Merrill/Triandis2001_JOP69_6_Allocentrism.pdf

Tolbert, K. (2002) "Japan's Voluntary Shut-Ins: Locked in Their Rooms, Young Men Shun Society." The Washington Post

USA Today, March 29, 1994

Van Ijzendoorn, M. H., & Kroonenberg, P. M. (1988). Cross-cultural patterns of attachment: A meta-analysis of the strange situation. *Child Development.*

Vertue, F. M. (2003). From adaptive emotion to dysfunction: An attachment perspective on social anxiety disorder. Personality and Social Psychology Review.

Vogel, E.F. (1971) *Japan's New Middle Class: The Salary Man and His Family in a Tokyo Suburb* (2nd end), Berkeley: University of California Press.

Watts J. (2002) *Public health experts concerned about "hikikomori"*. Lancet.

White, M. (2003). "Taking Note of Teen Culture in Japan: Dear Dairy, Dear Fieldworker." Doing Fieldwork in Japan. Theodore Bestor, Patricia G. Steinhoff, and Victoria LyonBestor. Eds. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Yeo, S. S. (2003). Bonding and attachment of Australian aboriginal children. Child Abuse Review

Yu, Q. (2017, June 25) *How Hikikomori in Youth Generation is Created: Insecurity and Shame in Japan.* Alice Evey. Retrieved from *https://aliceevey.com/2017/06/25/how-hikikomori-in-youth-generation-is-created-insecurity-and-shame-in-japan/*

Zielanziger, M. (2007) *Shutting Out the Sun: How Japan Created Its Own Lost Generation. Vintage Books.*

Rosa K. Kim was born in South Korea on December 4, 1995 and moved to the United States when she was five years old. Her family has lived in Ohio, California, and Texas. She enrolled in the Plan II Honors Program at the University of Texas at Austin in August of 2014. Her passion for the humanities and for learning led her to graduate in May of 2019 with a triple major in Plan II Honors, English, and History and a double minor in Psychology and Korean, and she plans to attend law school in the fall.